



More Than Words Can Say

Robert Barclay

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“I normally do not read male authors but someone recommended [Barclay] and all I can say to her is thank you.”

—*Fresh Fiction*

With his powerfully emotional debut, *If Wishes Were Horses*, author Robert Barclay immediately joined the ranks of Nicholas Sparks, Richard Paul Evans, and Robert James Waller. His second novel of love and hope, *More Than Words Can Say*, only confirms his place among them. A profoundly moving multi-generational family story centered around a woman’s return to her late grandmother’s lake cottage and the long-buried secrets she uncovers there, *More Than Words Can Say* will linger long in the heart and memory.

More Than Words Can Say Details

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Margo Brooks says

A very disappointing read. I was excited to read a story about the Adirondacks and the story was fine. The writing, however, although technically fine, served to distance the reader from the characters, even as the author was trying to bring you closer to their thoughts and feelings. I could understand this if it were self published, but since it was published by HarperCollins and promoted by them as a book club selection, I put a lot of blame on the editor.

If you don't understand what "show don't tell" means, read this book and you will understand. Everyone is doing something happily or sadly and their intimate thoughts and feelings are fully explained rather than shown through action. It disrupts the narrative and takes the reader out of the scene. That said, I don't think it would have been that hard (time consuming, but not hard) to take this book and rewrite it in such a way that the explanation came out and was replaced by action. I think that the author would have discovered new things about the characters in the process and the reader would have benefited.

I will be recommending this book to my sister, who like the main character owns a cottage on an Adirondack lake, but I hope that the author thinks about rewriting the book and that HarperCollins does a better job working with their authors in the future. That said, it would make a nice Lifetime movie.

Jessica says

Ughh finally, I'm done reading this book! I was looking forward to starting this one after I won an ARC from librarything, but by the end I was just tired of the story. The author had a good idea, but the execution was very poor and had me skimming the last 30 pages because it was so drawn out.

The main reason I didn't like this book, though, was because of the unrealistic dialogue. Some of the things Chelsea or Brandon say are SO ridiculous and there is NO WAY anyone would ever say that when they're talking to someone. Unrealistic dialogue is my biggest pet-peeve in books, so this book was so hard to read without getting annoyed with how stupid they sounded.

The idea of Chelsea moving to her Grandmother's cottage and reading her journal from the World War II era sounded like something I would enjoy, but it was, like I said, just too drawn out. I skimmed a lot of pages in between the journal readings because everything else seemed to be there to build "suspense" to the next time they read an entry. The author kept on saying how Chelsea was in so much pain and didn't know if she could handle another entry, but I got none of that emotion whatsoever. The emotion Chelsea felt seemed forced and during the big climax at the end was more of a speed bump...no huge reveal or event that really shocked me. It was also annoying how in the last 50 pages, Chelsea was planning some "secret" thing the reader didn't know because when the big secret was revealed, I was like "well duh that was going to happen!" I could see how the author tried to make this book a sweet romance, it just really did not make it there.

Jacqueline says

Jacqueline Luongo

April 9, 2013

Grade 12 Honors English

More Than Words can say

Chelsea Enright is a very wealthy socialite living in Syracuse, New York. Her father owns many car dealerships and her mother is a professional at spending Chelsea's father's money. When Brooke Chelsea's grandmother passes away, everyone is devastated. Chelsea finds herself trying to console her mother when she cannot even console herself. Soon Chelsea's life is changed forever. Not only because of the loss of her grandmother but also because of the things she left behind and most importantly the secret she wished Chelsea would uncover.

When Chelsea finds out she inherited her grandmother's lake house she is beyond surprised. Due to the pain of losing her grandmother she assumes she will just sell it. She soon receives a phone call in regards to her grandmother's will and she is told to come alone. When she arrives she is told that her grandmother left her specific instructions to live in the lake house. In the instructions she is told she can do anything she wants with the lake house so long as she goes and gives it a chance. This leaves Chelsea baffled especially knowing that her grandmother had not spoken about her treasured lake house after her accident which left her confined to a wheel chair for the remainder of her days.

Chelsea's first day on Lake Evergreen was anything but boring. Within her grandmother's instructions, Chelsea was directed to crack open a floorboard in the cottage where she would find Brooke's journal. We discover Brooke lived there during World War II where she waited for her husband Bill to return home from France. Soon enough Chelsea meets Jacque and Mariam the people who took care of the house after Brooke had left. Both fluent in French, they summon Dr. Brandon Yale from the cottage to the left of Chelsea's to help with her bags. Burning with anticipation she is desperate to read the journal Brooke had led her to posthumously.

After a small confrontation between Brandon and Chelsea's dogs they quickly find an interest in each other. As they begin to trust each other Chelsea decides to ask him to help her read Brooke's journal with her. From then on, Chelsea cooks a dinner every night from Brooke's cookbook and sits by a fire and reads through the long past secrets of Brooke Bartlett. Much like Chelsea, Brooke fell in love on Lake Evergreen. Told in Brooke's voice through her journal we discover she meets a man she tried to deny she loved even though she was married.

With many twists and turns we find that love, of course prevails. As Chelsea and Brandon fall in love Brooke's past intertwines them to a life of love and happiness. Though there is a "surprise" ending, the conclusion will leave you fulfilled and happy with its use of cliché love format. As wrong as it is you almost root for Brooke to be with the man she met that summer at the lake. This history filled love story will leave you heartbroken but also filled with a sense that everything happens for a reason even if it's not what we want.

In general, this book was a good read. I really liked the use of Brooke's personal journal entries and even putting the story in that time period so we can relive exactly what Brooke had gone through. Though the love stories of both Brooke and Chelsea were a bit cliché I could not help but overlook the familiarity of the story with its use deep inter-personal meaning. One thing I did not like about this book was the tone. It was corny and the use of punctuation marks made the dialogue juvenile. I am normally not a fan of male writers and Robert Barclay has not changed my mind. He tried a bit too hard to incorporate the emotional factors of women characters and made the females to be feeble and desperate for love. I enjoyed the flashbacks and the

story having to do with World War II but this definitely is not a favorite of mine. Overall, I do not regret reading this book mainly because of the posthumous instructions of Brooke which made the book much more interesting. It is a little hard to get into in the beginning but if you are looking for a sappy, similar writing style as Nicolas Sparks, *More Than Words* can say may be your book.

Tami says

I was very excited to read this book, I love books that combine the past and present into a wonderful story line. Unfortunately, the book was a disappointment. The characters were not engaging in the least and very unbelievable. The conversations the characters would have are even more strange, the dialogue felt forced and often times like it was written for a bad sitcom based in the 1950's. I also did not enjoy the endless description, the description of everyone's outfit in each scene, the furniture in every room of every house, the look in someones eyes or face or mouth during a scene, very over done and obnoxious.

The story line was interesting and without the other issues I could have liked this book, but, if they took out the things I did not like, the book would only be about 50 pages long!

Overall, I wish I could take back the time I spent reading this book.

Laura says

Chelsea Enright inherits her late grandmother Brooke's cottage in the Adirondacks and with it a secret diary and some photographs. The diary holds the clue as to why her grandmother closed the cottage 60 years ago and never returned to live there. When Chelsea goes up to the cottage, she meets her neighbour Dr. Brandon Yale and decides to spend the rest of the summer there as she discovers her grandmother's story.

The premise of this book is good: long-buried family secrets, a summer cottage, romance. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a melodramatic over-drawn tale that failed to move me. Sensitive as I am, I couldn't get into this book. It dragged, with characters that lacked depth and an unexciting predictable plot. I finished it only because I thought maybe the ending was going to be revelatory. Not at all. Everything is tied up too neatly in the end too. The whole thing was unrealistic, from the theatrical reactions of the characters to the men who shed tears quicker than my sister's toddler.

I think better editing was in order for this book. The overuse of ellipses, unrealistic dialogue and writing that left nothing to the imagination became irritating after a while. The setting was great, though. My family has spent summers in lakeside cottages and it is special. The author did manage to capture that feeling and I did enjoy some of the scenes, such as when Chelsea and Brandon flew over the lake in his floatplane.

I guess some would consider this novel a sweet romance, and if you like that kind of romance along with a story of a grandmother's secret hidden in a diary, and you are willing to disregard all the things that irked me, then you might just enjoy this book a whole lot more than I did.

Sara Strand says

I will tell you right away I liked this book. I really love a book that will suck you into it within the first ten pages. The hook in this book is that right from the beginning- you are intrigued by the letter Chelsea's grandmother leaves her and you just have to know what is going to happen. I don't want to give anything away so I'm going to be annoyingly vague about it.

Some great things about this book are that it's about a woman's self discovery in a not cheesy way, there aren't sweeping romances or things that realistically probably wouldn't happen. I also really love books about multi generational connections and learning about your family history and secrets- which this book definitely has. The only thing that I find annoying, and this is just a life annoyance I have, is that people are too easy to say that a revealed secret can change everything in their world or who they are. No it can't, don't be stupid. I'm starting to think I really am one of a kind in that I don't let history or weird family things or whatever to hinder what I do now. Basically- I don't let any of that stuff be an excuse for how I am today. Does that make sense? So when I felt like this is where that book was going, I'll be honest- I felt stabby. But in the end it didn't matter because I loved it just the same.

It is a very fast read because you want to dig up the secrets with Chelsea and you almost feel like you're her summer camp buddy on a mystery hunt. I am the first stop on this tour, but check back here to see what other people are saying!

Simone says

Barfety Barf Barf!

Holy Moly that was one bad book.

I was expecting something along the lines of a WW2 intrigue based on quotes like this in the description: "when Chelsea finds her grandmother's WWII diaries, she's stunned to discover that they hold secrets she never suspected . . . and they have the power to turn her own life upside down".

I never suspected it was a romance! I thought she'd discover her granny was a spy or worked in a secret government department during the war and lead rescues attempts or was a hidden Nazi! Something INTRESTING! Nope, I was duped. (I really have to learn to read more customer reviews before buying!!)

I hate romances; they are just not my thing. I find them boring and slow and melodramatic and cliché... is it just because I haven't read a good one? I decided to give this one a go because I was fairly certain I could get through it in one day and I don't have anything else downloaded right now that I'm dying to read.

I really hated it. The start was just blatant exposition, I didn't care about any of the characters; I found them all stupid, the dialogue was sappy "She urgently wanted him to leave yet desperately wanted him to stay". Barf. Everything felt set-up and contrived and dumb and predictable... you could basically guess the next steps in the story as you read along, it's was all so cliché and unoriginal!!

The basic plot made no sense me: If someone bequeaths you a cottage and gives you secret letter with instructions that leads to the discovery of a secret journal are you REALLY going to PURPOSEFULLY delay reading the journal? Are you going read the entries slowly over the course of a few days? NO. You're going to rip into it on the spot and devour it in one sitting - don't tell me otherwise. I think even the author suspected readers might think the same thing and that's why he makes a point of explaining and justifying Chelsea's intention to read the journal this way. Ridiculous.

In addition, she really needs to see cardiologist. Every 5 minutes something is tugging at her heart... that might be serious.

Emily says

I received an advance copy of this book and I really wanted to like it, but I was very disappointed in the writing style. There were overused phrases throughout the novel (specifically "precious" when referring to wartime rations of sugar, coffee and champagne), and Chelsea's interior monologue included phrases that NO ONE would think to themselves (i.e. "as I look down upon Brandon, I realize that I was wrong and that all the others in my life were mere dalliances." REALLY!?). I found myself rolling my eyes quite frequently at the flowery language and "Whatever shall I DO?" attitude of the main character. I skimmed the last twenty pages of unnecessary story (just wanted to get to the very-built-up final letter that didn't add much to the ending). This book had potential, but when writing is distracting and deters from me being absorbed into the story, I can't recommend it.

Kathleen (Kat) Smith says

Once in a blue moon you come across an exceptional book that leaves you in awe of just how great the story is and how emotionally connected to it you are. I have found such a treasure in the latest book from Robert Barclay, *More Than Words Can Say*, and to say if you haven't read it, you'll want to pick this one up and completely set aside some time to get lost in the characters and the story.

The premise of the story takes place at a lakeside cottage tucked away in the Adirondack mountains where Chelsea Bartlett has been left with her grandmother, Brooke's lakeside cottage and the contents of the home in her grandmother's will. The stipulations of the will state that Chelsea can do whatever she wants with the cottage after she visits there and locates the contents of a small tin, her grandmother has hidden beneath the floorboards of the guest bedroom.

Chelsea takes her grandmother's advice and heads to the cottage sure she will sell it once she sees it, but once she arrives, she feels a sense of peaceful tranquility that can't be explained. No one has lived in the cottage for 60 years and is has been carefully looked after by a French couple who were hired by her grandmother's attorney.

Chelsea finds her grandmother's journal and some old photographs hidden in a tin box that will take her back to a summer of 1942, that her grandmother spent at the cottage shortly after the war began and just recently married to Bill. The time at the cottage for Chelsea and reading the contents of the journal will change her

life forever in profound and never expected ways as she finds herself transported back to a simpler time during one summer in 1942.

I received More Than Words Can Say compliments of William Morrow, a division of Harper Collins Publishers for my honest review and was so sad to reach the end of the book. I could perfectly imagine myself sitting on the porch overlooking the lake, hearing the waves lap upon the shore and the smell of pine trees blowing in on the summer breeze as Chelsea spends time with her grandmother in a very special and unique way that will bond them together in a life changing way. If you're a fan of Nicholas Sparks, then meeting Robert Barclay's characters and writing style will be a literature lottery of sorts. An exceptional read and one you WON'T want to miss. I am HIGHLY RECOMMENDING this one and awarding it 10 out of 10 stars! Trust me, once you read this one, you'll want more!

Coleen says

2/11/12 - I always feel bad when I have to give a bad review, but here goes....

This book description sounded good: A young woman (Chelsea) inherits her grandmother's lake cottage -- a cottage that has been boarded up for over 50 years -- as well as all its secrets. So off goes Chelsea to rediscover the cottage in an attempt to learn more about her grandmother. The plot was okay. However, it was pretty predictable & not overly original.

The thing that bothered me the most was the writing style. It was way too flowery, too cliché'd, & just overwhelmingly hokey. I found myself wanting to gag over and over again. There were unnecessary details, clichés, outdated prose, & phrases repeated to excess. Chelsea's thoughts to herself were especially annoying. I often felt like I was reading a bad soap opera -- it was so overly dramatic. I don't consider myself a professional writer (not even close), but this book made me want to sit down & rewrite the whole story. I'm convinced I could've done it better.

Samantha Glasser says

When Brooke Enright dies, her grand-daughter Chelsea inherits her summer home in the Adirondacks. Brooke left her messages informing her there was a diary hidden beneath the floorboards in the old house which could explain the reason why she never returned to visit the cottage after her husband was killed in WWII. As Chelsea discovers her grandmother's secret, she also finds herself falling for her doctor neighbor in the home next door.

The story sounds interesting enough, but the quality of the writing really detracts from what could have been a much better novel. The dialogue is abysmally artificial and reminds me of how I imagined adults sounded when I was 11. For example: "I have no way of knowing what the rest of the journal will reveal, but one thing is becoming certain... Brooke's heart was becoming torn. And I can also sense that it goes deeper than the mere words that she wrote down. It's as if I can literally feel what was happening to her. Call it a 'woman thing,' if you want, but with the reading of each new entry, I can literally experience her world starting to turn upside down. And I can also sense that it was beginning to scare her." This is spoken aloud, and all of these feelings and realizations are spelled out only a few paragraphs previous in quotes from Brooke's diary.

In addition to the bad dialogue, the characters are not very realistic. Their judgments of each other are always miraculously spot-on which doesn't provide much conflict to maintain interest. The language could have been better chosen. The author uses "butt" awkwardly as if he went back and censored any swearing he might have used (and should have used to make things sound more realistic).

I also feel that the author disclosed too much information that should have been merely implied. There is a lot of filler which needs to be edited out. Because of this, the story is very predictable, and the fact that it takes the characters so long to pick up on the "clues" makes them seem about as perceptive as Mary Kate and Ashley in their mystery movies.

Kathryn says

This was a new author for me when it was recommended. This was a light summer read, easily predictable but fun just the same. I must say some of the dialog was a bit cheesy. Does anyone really call their spouse darling? But that's just me. I had fun reading the book and that's all that matters for me.

Erin says

I have to say I was super disappointed with this book. I always open a book with an open mind, and I'm always searching for something fantastic. This book was not. I know it has some editing to be done still, but overall, I was not crazy about the storyline or the writing style.

The story was set up like it was going to involve some mysterious, dark secret. The plot ends up being rather mundane...maybe this would have worked as an 'immoral' story several decades ago. Compared to the types of behavior we see exhibited on tv, movies, and in books, this story is completely anti-climatic.

As for the writing style, every paragraph ends with an ellipsis. Every character is introduced through a list of their traits ("He was an attractive man in his early sixties with a full head of gray hair," "She was a tall and attractive woman of 33") etc. All of the characters are stereotypes and their thoughts often read like a soap opera.

This book was predictable and offered characters and scenes that have been written about for hundreds of years. I didn't fall in love with any of the characters--actually, in the end, I didn't care about any of them one way or another.

Julie says

This book reminded me of Nicholas Spark's writing style. It was a sweet lovely, easy to read story and I enjoyed it very much. I read it in a couple days. A few of the lines stood out to me, " Rather than parting two old friends, the death of one has a way of joining them forever." Emily answered. (So did she know?) That's a mystery.

" Love is something that each of us strives for, dreams of, clings to, and rejoices in. But who among us can claim to be it's master?" (So true)

" Reticence between two lovers can often cause the death of their ardor." Again so true, if love is not engaged and fed it dies slow death.

" As best we know, it's the last form of communication between Brooke and Greg." (But was it? Given what happens at the very end, it seems doubtful)

Anyway, I enjoyed this sweet love story and how it unfolded. And reading about the closeness the granddaughter felt toward her grandmother. And the care in which the grandmother told her story. Nicely done Robert Barclay! And the recipes at the end was a nice touch!!!

Steph Ruswick says

You can tell this was written by a man who doesn't understand women.

I mean, seriously, no one is going to be shocked to the point of tears to find out her grandmother cheated on her grandfather. No one is going to need that excessive of hand holding or so such ridiculous amounts of emotional support from a random dude to read a diary. Not any stable, normal, sane person that is. The way Barclay writes you'd think that Chelsea is unable to read diary entries by herself because she will become so overwhelmed with emotion that she will faint or have a break down or some other such nonsense. And who fucking reads only one entry of a diary a day? Especially one of a relative that you were close to? Any normal person would read that ASAP and not dick around...It's unrealistic. The author tries to create suspense but all it did was infuriate and bore me.

There was some drama about a lost fiance and an angry brother, but that didn't really go anywhere or create any problems besides a few awkward encounters. And really it was just a misunderstanding and after one long talk everyone is super best friends again...*eye roll*

Also don't go up to other women they just met and cry "Let's be best friends and talk about boys!" Ok, maybe that wasn't verbatim, but that's essentially what happened at one point. It was just bad and insulting to the female gender.
