



Finding Hannah

Fiona McCallum

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A tender story of one woman's journey through grief, and learning to live life again.

Hannah Ainsley has the perfect life — an adoring husband, a close relationship with her parents, a wonderful job, and amazing friends. Best of all, it's Christmas — her favourite day of the whole year! It's a time to share with her family and friends, and enjoy the festivities.

But this year will be like no other. Tragedy strikes and Hannah's world is shattered. If she's going to cope, she's going to need all the support she can gather and draw on every bit of her strength. Life will never be the same again but it's soon clear she has no alternative but to pull together a future from the remaining fragments.

As Hannah heads towards the next festive season she will have to make a decision — should she stay with the people who have supported her or should she leave? Could the answer lie in a delayed gift?

Fiona McCallum's most touching novel so far is a rich tapestry of deep emotions that is sure to capture the hearts of many.

Finding Hannah Details

Date : Published March 20th 2017 by Harlequin Enterprises (Australia) Pty Ltd

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Author : Fiona McCallum

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From Reader Review Finding Hannah for online ebook

Christine says

I won a proof copy thanks to a Goodreads competition.

This book is full of emotion. From how to come to terms with a devastating tragedy that occurs during Christmas celebrations and dealing with life after the turmoil of events. I did enjoy reading it and felt this emotion wholeheartedly.

Susan Dawson says

Oh just beautiful - a really beautiful read!!! Loved this story. I'm a crazy dog lady & almost choked on tears when Charlie laid his head in her lap. I had a Charlie boy and he was just as perceptive xxxx ???

Krystal says

I was really looking forward to reading this, so was pleased to win an uncorrected proof copy through Goodreads. Unfortunately, it wound up being a bit of a disappointment.

Our protagonist, Hannah, is struck by tragedy on Christmas Day. What follows is the story of how she deals with her grief and finds her will to live again.

The premise gives the novel the potential to be an absolute, soul-rending story that takes your emotions on a rollercoaster ride parallel to Hannah's. The delivery, however, let the emotion fall through the cracks. We get a lot of show and tell but very little *feel*. The step-by-step conversations and descriptions are mundane and pointless, and detract from the heart of the story. Not that it really has one.

Hannah, as a character, was very hard to love, which was instantly a problem. Throughout the novel we learn very little about her beyond her attachment to her husband and parents, and her hatred of animals. She seems to have very little personality, so when grief turns her into a zombie we're not given much of a contrast, making it a fairly redundant theme that's drawn out far too long. Her friends are physically supportive but irritating, and in general there doesn't seem to be much growth at all. We don't see much of a journey; just little moments where the author spells out how she's feeling. All the work is done for you, so there's no need for the reader's imagination. Makes for a rather anti-climatic read.

I appreciated the Melbourne setting but this novel does nothing to sell the location to the reader. Melbourne has such an artistic charm - a real cultural vibe - but this novel barely skims the surface. Again, it's all talk and facts, and very little emotion regarding the beauty of the city: its charming laneway culture, the unhurried bustle, the diverse population. There was so much subject matter wasted on entire dull conversations and unremarkable occurrences.

To put it plainly, this story is not much of a story. There's no real definition to it, no heart or soul. It could have been so much more if it had manipulated my emotions but I was left feeling disappointed by the bland presentation of a lifeless character and her mundane life. Even the ending made no impact. Grief has so

many facets and this novel just failed to explore that idea properly: Hannah loses the three most important people in her life, and all she really does is cry a lot. There's no trauma, no anger or bargaining, no real numbness or inappropriate cheer. She's just really, really sad.

I myself am saddened by how much potential was wasted in this. It could have been so beautiful. What a waste.

Tracy says

It was ok. First Ten chapters of crying and heartbreak tho. Took an awful long time to get past it. The book was entirely about this heartbreak and very little else. It wasn't a bad read but I would liked to have seen the story move past this and onto some good in her life but then again I think this was the whole point of the story. Was a tad depressing at times.

Deb Bodinnar says

A sad story about losing loved ones and how hard it is to move on. A touching read but I have enjoyed Fiona's other books much more.

Bec Belt says

I've been a fan of Fiona McCallum's books for many years and, like the rest, *Finding Hannah* drew me in and wouldn't let me go until the last word. This tale of loss and of learning to stand on your own two feet is beautifully written and paced, as Fiona takes the reader along the journey of tragedy at a speed that makes you feel like you're there with Hannah experiencing what she is experiencing.

Finding Hannah begins with tragedy on Christmas Day. The day used to be a time of great joy and of being surrounded by family and friends for Hannah, but she soon learns that memories are more precious than material items or certain days on the calendar and I enjoyed seeing her grow. I found her character to be a little sheltered, which she admitted throughout the book and I didn't like that she wasn't an animal lover, as I can't understand how anyone couldn't be, but she redeems herself and becomes a character I could admire for her strength and resilience.

I feel that Fiona has experienced all the emotions that Hannah experiences in this book as the writing came through as so authentic and true to what someone going through major loss would be feeling. There was no part of the story that I felt was not real or too far-fetched to be believable, which only added to the beauty of this story.

This is not a book I would recommend you just sit down with for a lazy Sunday read; it is one that needs to have time and emotion invested in it as it is so heavy for at least the first half of the book, but for the story to ring true, it needs to be this way. Another friend reading this book had to put it down and come back to it a few times as the sadness affected her so much.

I enjoyed this book even more than her previous books. Another great book from Fiona as she brings her characters and places to life on the page and in the minds of her readers.

Thanks to Beauty and Lace for the chance to review this book: <http://bookgirl.beautyandlace.net/boo...>

Dale Pearce says

Hannah Ainsley has the perfect life — an adoring husband, a close relationship with her parents, a wonderful job, and amazing friends. Best of all, it's Christmas — her favourite day of the whole year! It's a time to share with her family and friends, and enjoy the festivities.

But this year will be like no other. Tragedy strikes and Hannah's world is shattered. If she's going to cope, she's going to need all the support she can gather and draw on every bit of her strength. Life will never be the same again but it's soon clear she has no alternative but to pull together a future from the remaining fragments.

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Sarah says

Fiona McCallum tells a beautiful & captivating story of love, love lost & self discovery in her latest novel, *Finding Hannah*.

Hannah Ainsley leads a charmed life, has a wonderful husband, loving parents and has an array of thoughtful friends.

Christmas brings everyone together and is above all, Hannah's most treasured time of year.

But Christmas Day this year brings a debilitating tragedy and her world is unceremoniously torn apart in one foul strike.

A journey through her grief, survival and learning to live again...

I was swept up instantly, Fiona McCallum has written this so beautifully.

It is moving and thoughtful despite the obvious.

It is a wonderful read and the author is indeed a master of storytelling as Good Reading Magazine Quotes.

All the Characters are instantly relatable, they sound like they could be your own circle of family and friends. I think this will strike a cord in everyone who decides to read it.

As someone who adores Fantasy/Sci Fi, Historic Fiction & the odd Youth Fiction... I am a new convert to this Author.

Thank you Harlequin Australia & Beauty and Lace Magazine for the opportunity of reading this book. It truly leaves you mindful!

Margi says

I was really looking forward to reading this novel. Given the events that happened on a particular Christmas

Day early in the novel, you can understand the absolute devastating loss and grief that Hannah would face. Unfortunately, all I felt that was portrayed was how sad Hannah was and felt the book had so much potential to take us through Hannah's very challenging journey and healing but it didn't. Actually, I felt not too much happened or too much was shared and wouldn't recommend this.

Billyjean says

Very interesting exploration of grief and survival.

Amanda - Mrs B's Book Reviews says

*<https://mrsbbookreviews.wordpress.com>

Established Australian author Fiona McCallum is one of my favourite writers. *Finding Hannah* is McCallum's latest release and it marks a departure from her usual rural fiction novels. *Finding Hannah* is an emotionally moving novel, ideally slotting into the flourishing women's fiction or life lit genre. It follows the process of grief, after a young woman suffers an immeasurable loss. *Finding Hannah* is a touching tale that offers the reader a heartfelt sojourn into bereavement, acceptance and rebuilding one's life after loss.

Hannah Ainsley's favourite time of the year is Christmas. Hannah is the blessed only child of two loving parents and the wife of an adoring husband. She loves nothing more than cooking up a treat and surrounding herself with her family and friends. All this changes one Christmas day when Hannah receives the most devastating news imaginable. Her life in tatters, Hannah must summon as much strength and willingness to continue living her life as best she can, in the face of deep loss. Drawing on the support of family, friends and colleagues, Hannah slowly works to rebuild her life. Eventually, almost a year passes in Hannah's fog of grief. Hannah is also faced with a tough decision, should she mark the first anniversary of her loss by spending Christmas at home with the support of those who have stuck by her in the last year, or should she take a journey abroad? The solution to Hannah's predicament may lie in the revelation of an unexpected gift, which helps to seal Hannah's fate.

Finding Hannah is an affective piece of fiction. It is great to see Fiona McCallum, an author I have admired for some time, spread her wings a little and move beyond writing rural romance. By turning her hand to women's life lit, McCallum has made a bold and successful move. I found *Finding Hannah* a full bodied narrative, it is also very character driven, offering the reader an examination into the various mental states of a person going through the difficult grief process.

McCallum has taken a topic that most people can relate to, the experience of losing a loved one, as the central theme for her latest novel. The resounding message that I took from reading *Finding Hannah* is just how distinctive each person's journey through grief can be. Time also plays an integral role in *Finding Hannah*. McCallum makes us aware that some instances of bereavement take longer than others to heal. I can definitely see *Finding Hannah* playing a role in supporting those who have been through loss themselves, hopefully finding some semblance from this book. McCallum's embracing style of writing easily takes the reader into her fold, through Hannah's emotional journey and many will find this comforting.

McCallum draws on a different type of setting than her usual country based fare. Melbourne is one of the principal locations of the novel and McCallum does a very fine job of portraying the intrinsic beauty of one

of Australia's main cities. One of the intersecting moments in the novel is Hannah's journey abroad, which is spurred on by the legacy Hannah's departed left behind. Linked to this is an interesting touch on the significance of a ladybug, which also appears on the front cover of this book. I liked the way McCallum explored this angle of the story, it was very touching and meaningful. The resulting travel sequences of the book were described perfectly by McCallum. I only wish our protagonist would have stayed longer in her cosmopolitan holiday locale of New York, it certainly strengthened my resolve to visit this city with my husband in the future.

Within the narrative of *Finding Hannah*, McCallum shows us the extremes of life, the happiness and almost perfection of Hannah Ainsley's life prior to the Christmas day tragedy. She has a set of supportive parents, a thriving career, a happy marriage, a fine roof over her head and a great set of friends. It all comes crashing down quite dramatically for Hannah. McCallum portrays Hannah's despair and sadness with a sense of intuition that only someone who has lived through this experience could convey so deftly onto the pages of a novel. McCallum gives us hope through Hannah's experience and makes us see that it is possible to live again after such a loss. She expresses how it is important to live day by day and that it does take time to adjust to a changed way of life after loss.

Through her supporting characters, McCallum shows how most people rally around the bereaved at a time of loss. There are a handful who do not have the right words to say or choose to distance themselves from this person due to the awkwardness of death. McCallum takes the time to examine this. However, she also explores the people who do matter to Hannah and do everything in their power to support her through her loss. These include her best friend, aunty and the wife of her boss, who ends up becoming a close friend through Hannah's loss. Each of these characters is endearing and lovingly drawn by McCallum. Hannah was blessed to have these caring people in her life.

Finding Hannah was a stirring and deeply emotional book that provides a searingly honest look at an earth shattering incident of grief, hitting at the very core of a woman who was happily going along with life. It was a novel that impacted me much more than I expected and the prospect of being placed in the same shoes as Hannah petrified me to be honest. However, it is a reality and a life lesson which we follow through with the appealing lead, Hannah. Don't let Fiona McCallum's newest novel pass you by, it is McCallum's most emotionally moving work to date and I hope to see more of this style of fiction from one of my favourite novelists.

Jay Hicks says

I've had this in my to be read list for a while now and am so glad I got to listening to the audiobook version through Bolinda Digital via my library service. I love this author, and this book did not disappoint. I was captivated and held there until the end. I would ready anything by Fiona. Easy-going, but tough subjects revealed through interesting characters who just take over your heart. Ladybirds... aww.

Bree T says

This is another difficult book to review because there isn't really a bunch of things that happen to construct the plot. It's about a woman named Hannah who has everything going for her – wonderful parents, great husband who is also a best friend, job she enjoys, lovely house, good close friends. Then on Christmas Day

almost everything she loves is taken from her and she's left to pick up the pieces of her shattered life.

This is an exploration of a deep grief, the sort of devastation that could easily destroy a person and from that standpoint it's quite interesting because grief is something that is very individual and it's something that people experience in very differing ways and to degrees. I haven't experienced the sort of gut-wrenching loss that Hannah has, thankfully but perhaps because of that I did find it a little hard to immerse myself in the story because that's basically it. Hannah learning to live again after her loss, learning to cope and take each day at a time, adjust to this new existence that has become her life.

Despite her loss, Hannah still has very good people around her – a supportive boss and his wife, who becomes a friend, as well as a longtime family friend who lives across the road. There are also other wonderful people who provide her with strength, security, love and a sense of family. She is able to take time and space to breathe, reassess, decide what she wants to do. When she's ready to go back to work, they welcome her although she feels the awkwardness of moments with colleagues who just don't know what to say to her.

I think everyone has imagined themselves in various horrible scenarios at some stage or other – I know I've thought about how I would cope if certain things were to happen and these were things I had to think about realistically as well. They're things you don't want to think about but at the same time, they creep in. Books like this are a good way to explore that sort of fear I think, by identifying with characters currently experiencing tragedy. And I think that's good because grief and loss are an important part of human nature.

But – and this is kind of a big but – I found myself wanting a bit more from this book. A bit more than Hannah just trying to put her life back together. It would probably make quite moving reading for many people but at the same time, it's also a teeny bit repetitive and not very much really happens throughout the story after that initial tragedy. By the time I had read through 200-odd pages of that, I was ready for a bit more, a conflict or something meaty to flesh out the story. But obviously it wasn't going to be that sort of story because it was very even in tone, a quiet kind of story, very much character driven rather than plot driven. It was about Hannah's journey in self-healing.

Because of this, I did find that my attention wandered occasionally whilst I was reading it, especially during the New York section, which felt a bit jarring – I wasn't sure why it was there because it felt like Hannah could've been anywhere. The essence or culture of New York wasn't really coming across on the page and Hannah's lack of real enthusiasm, a just 'going through the motions' might've taught her something but it seemed like such a long and expensive lesson to learn.

Ultimately this one was just an okay read for me – I just found myself seeking more from it and that's probably on me.

Monique Mulligan says

A touching self-discovery read about a woman's small steps toward healing after a horrible tragedy – I would say it's my favourite by McCallum to date. I expected a tried-and-tested story about finding love after tragedy, but what I got was something deeper, as McCallum's protagonist learns to live again.

Brenda says

The tradition of Christmas day had been passed from Hannah's parents to her when they moved into the retirement village, and Hannah took it on with relish. Alongside her husband of five years, Tristan, Hannah would prepare for weeks and the hot cooked pork and turkey with all the trimmings was prepared whatever the weather. Though in Melbourne, it was a jackpot – and it was looking to be hot this particular Christmas. All their close friends along with Hannah's parents were coming for Christmas lunch – it would be so much fun.

But with devastating force, tragedy struck. Completely out of the blue – Hannah was shattered; she would never cope – life would never be the same. Sam, Hannah's best friend stayed by her side; everyone was kind. But could she piece her life back together? Hannah had no idea how she would do it – or even if she wanted to...

Finding Hannah by Aussie author Fiona McCallum is a beautiful, sad and heart wrenching story of tragedy and deep, soul searing grief; the story of how one person copes with life's harsh lessons and how the support of friends is vital. Filled with emotion, joy, heartache and love, *Finding Hannah* is a lovely story which I have no hesitation in recommending. I love the cover too, and once I discovered the association, found it extremely fitting.

With thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for my digital copy to read and review.
