



## Annie Freeman's Fabulous Traveling Funeral

*Kris Radish*

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For Katherine Givens and the four women about to become her best friends, the adventure begins with a UPS package. Inside is a pair of red sneakers filled with ashes and a note that will forever change their lives. Katherine's oldest and dearest friend, the irrepressible Annie Freeman, left one final request—a traveling funeral—and she wants the most important women in her life as “pallbearers.”

From Sonoma to Manhattan, Katherine, Laura, Rebecca, Jill, and Marie will carry Annie's ashes to the special places in her life. At every stop there's a surprise encounter and a small miracle waiting, and as they whoop it up across the country, attracting interest wherever they go, they share their deepest secrets—tales of broken hearts and second chances, missed opportunities and new beginnings. And as they grieve over what they've lost, they discover how much is still possible if only they can unravel the secret Annie left them....

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

## Annie Freeman's Fabulous Traveling Funeral Details

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Author : Kris Radish

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### Tara says

In my sophomore English class there was a girl named Pamela Salter who really didn't like to read, or analyze her reading, or something. When we had independent reading assignments, she would always pick the most insipid novels she possibly could find that met the page number requirements, and read those. It became a running joke, the teacher would ask what this month's "Pammy Book" was. Occasionally she would pick up something I had read, and I felt a sort of mortification, because man I hated that girl. Her mother would pull her out of school once a month for half a day to take her shopping.

Anyway, usually one can indentify a Pammy book by cover and title - and this certainly qualifies. Another example would be The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants, or He's Just Not That Into You, or anything by Jennifer Weiner. Sometimes Pammy Books are entertaining, but it's kind of like a one-night stand - there's always a chance you'll wake up in the morning afterwards and go "oh, God, what have I done?"

This book had a cute premise about commonalities of experience among middle aged women and the ubiquitous parts of living as a female, especially one isolated from a context of other women. The execution of the plot, however, makes it a difficult book to really be absorbed in, there are six main characters with common names [Jill, Laura, Marie, Katherine, and Rebbecca, with the exotic exception of Balinda] and their dialogue styles are all incredibly similar and So Stilted. Not only do they end up saying things that no normal woman says off-the-cuff, but they all have the same vernacular and turn-of-phrase, despite being from all over the country [+one from Poland], leaving the reader to pause occasionally and try to remember which character this is and what her backstory is.

It's a beach read, a dime romance novel with no sex, a book that might be turned into a movie with Glenn Close and Stockard Channing and a bunch of the Ya-ya Sisterhood women making it an experience of two hours, rather than 300 pages.

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### Jenn says

By the end of this book, I was tired of reading about how wonderful Annie Freeman was. The story was just too sappy for me.

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### Sally says

Rarely do I review a book but this one ticked me off so much I can hardly stand it!!!

I gave the book one star because I think the premise was great. The execution left much to be desired.

Here are a few of the troubling highlights.

Just because five women are grieving does not mean they all burst into tears simultaneously throughout their travels.

If five women are drinking together and someone buys them a round of drinks, (on two separate occasions) surely one of them is going to be curious enough and (hopefully) polite enough to discover who the person is and go over to thank them.

A charming, loving, gorgeous man fathers a close friend's children and then takes absolutely no active role in their lives. He may be gay but he is supposed to be human.

Champagne might go right to their heads and perhaps they are ditzy enough that "they could care less." The women fly to Duluth from New York following 'the frozen tundra across top of Minnesota.' Look at a map. One does not fly over Northern Minnesota to reach Duluth, (from Minneapolis or New York) nor is there frozen tundra anywhere in Minnesota at any time of year. (Thirty pages later they are all swimming naked in Lake Superior.)

It was too much to discover the lowly bartender was actually a two time published author and a therapist. I'm thrilled it worked our perfectly for everyone but life just isn't so perfect.

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### **Book Concierge says**

Annie G Freeman knew she was dying (ovarian cancer), so she planned an unusual funeral. Her ashes were to be scattered over several sites that had importance in her life, and her "pallbearers" were to be several women she'd known and loved.

This is a pretty interesting premise and could have been a decent book. But Radish has given us cardboard characters, and over-written scenarios. I think a 7-year-old could determine the "important lessons" at each of the stops on the funeral route; but Radish doesn't trust her readers to let them discern this for themselves. Instead, she hits us over the head with long, serious monologues, which are then further interpreted by one of the other women so everyone understands how important this was. Puh-leeze!

Linda Stephens does an okay job reading the audio book. She does not sufficiently differentiate all the many female characters to make them easily distinguishable. Still, it's not difficult to follow. Her emphasis on the "important" parts drove me nuts.

I give it 1 star just because the premise was interesting (and I must be feeling generous, or am just so glad to be done with it).

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### **Marie says**

I really, really wanted to like this book. It had a great plot and premise. Annie Freeman dies of cancer, and before she dies she arranges a "traveling funeral" for her closest friends. She sends them airline tickets, rental car vouchers, and credit cards to take a journey around the country to places that gave her life meaning. In theory, it was a wonderful setting for a meaningful story about women's friendships and the journey of grief and life. I would give the idea three or four stars.

But the writing was exhausting to read. One reviewer said that it was "overwrought," and it was also overwritten. Long, runon, and flowery sentences and paragraphs, and way too much telling and not enough showing. The funeral doesn't even start until 100 pages into the book! The characters were too perfect and there was very little conflict or suspense.

I enjoyed some parts of the book--for example, the stories about their friend Annie that they uncovered along the way--but I found myself scanning great chunks of the book and anxious to reach the end so I could read a better book. Never a good sign.

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### **Betsy says**

pure crap. didn't finish it.

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### **Andrea Guy says**

I don't think I've ever been so moved by a book. I realized going in that this was a book that you either love or you hate. I loved it. It is a book that really shows the power of friendship and the bonds that women share between one another. I adored each one of Annie's pallbearers on her traveling funeral.

Each woman was very different and yet through their common bond, their friendship with Annie, they all come to be great friends. Its quite likely that you'll discover a bit of yourself in one of the characters. For me it was Balinda, a daughter that is trapped by taking care of her ailing mother.

There is so much about this book that makes the reader reflect on life and death. The book really seemed to carry a strong message of live life to the fullest. Annie may not have had a perfect life, but through her own trials she shared this belief with the five women she was closest two.

The idea of a traveling funeral was quite odd to me at first but as you learned the reasons Annie chose the places she did for her friends to visit and spread her ashes it makes more and more sense. It also really became a celebration of her life rather than a somber occasion.

The funeral book that they all wrote in is an idea that I came to love as I read. Whenever they had thoughts of Annie they wrote them down, rather than having a book with names of the people that came. It was a memento of their thoughts and feelings of their friend, with some remarks on what she would have said to their thoughts.

The book was so well written. The characters introduced in an orderly fashion. Radish introduced each woman as Katherine called them about the funeral and then shared how Annie became part of each woman's life.

I alternated between tears and laughter as I read this book. It really reached in and touched a part of me. It made me long for friends like Katherine, Laura, Jill, Rebecca, Maria, Balinda and Annie. I don't think I could recommend any book as highly as I do this one.

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### **Heather says**

I have to say, I'm disappointed with this book so far. The writing is so flowery (not the right word) that it gets in the way of a potentially great story.

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### **Aaron says**

I had to read this for a book club I was hosting a few years ago. Being a man (apparently the author thinks that this is a huge disadvantage), I knew that I would be a little out of my element, but I volunteered to head up said club and vowed to give every book an honest, earnest chance. That being said...I absolutely hated this book.

The vast majority of this novel is spent granting 'magical' status to anything and everything in the known universe. The male characters might as well be cardboard cutouts and are generally not physically present, only occasionally referred to (there's the gay one, the stupid one, the slobbering rapist, etc.) The main characters are all the same: middle-aged, weepy spinsters who are all too ready to share some precious, meaningful, 'magical' (there's that word again!) moment with whoever or whatever happens to be nearby, as long as it isn't in any way masculine. I feel like I read the world's longest, sappiest sympathy card and I'll never be quite the same. In a bad way.

So, bottom line...flat characters going through predictable development in contrived situations that scream 'This could never, would never, should never happen in real life!' Complete strangers dancing in an airport terminal...need I say more?!

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### **Kathleen says**

I started out with high hopes for this book, but it turned out a little anticlimactic for me. What a brilliant thought - a traveling funeral, sort of like the movie "Elizabethtown", but with 5 older female characters in the title role. But the author really litters the plot with flowery prose on the meaning of life and how people grieve for the dead in so many different ways, and that there's not a wrong way to do it.

By the end chapters, I sort of wanted to skip to the end because she'd said the same thing in every single chapter. Not only that, but you lack creativity when you begin 6 paragraphs in a row with the phrase "Of course..." or "They cried...". Holy cow. That works for one out of every 35 books I think.

I would have enjoyed this more if the author had developed the characters more, developed the action a little more, and dropped half of the philosophical banter.

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### **Diane says**

When I finished this book I felt fulfilled, satisfied, contemplative and slightly giddy. Also, desireous of a traveling funeral (many years from now). While reading it, I laughed a lot, cried more than once, saw myself, my sisters and my friends in many of the traveling moments. The opening description of how a seemingly small incident (the disintegration of a favorite and dependable undergarment) can be the last straw was a hoot.

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### **Angela2932 says**

The Beautiful Ms. Bonnie (my very old dog) felt compelled to review this book and warn all potential readers to avoid it! She borrowed the book from me, as I was reading it for my book club, and then she did

me the splendid favor of throwing it in the trash. Bonnie said that I should not even donate it to a thrift store as it would be almost criminal to inflict this drivel on someone else.

Annie Freeman's Fabulous Traveling Funeral by Kris Radish LOOKED like it would be a funny and woman-empowering read. The premise is that a "funeral" is arranged by a woman, just before she dies, for 4 of her friends. They've never met each other, and Annie leaves them instructions, tickets, money, sending them off to visit 4 cities of significance to her while she was alive.

Sounds like it could be a two-week adventure and Bonnie thought she'd come to be very involved with the quirky characters throughout the trip. But Bonnie made horrific gagging noises and said that if Annie hadn't already "died", she'd want to kill her herself, along with her martyr-like friends.

Bonnie thinks the biggest problem with the book is. . . well. . . the writing! The author has this maddening habit of taking a sentence (like "She wondered if. . . .") and then using it like a sentence completion stem, filling in the blank about 10 times, until you wanted to stab the book with an ice pick.

(This would be a typical style, especially the last segment: She wondered if this book was secretly a plot to make everyone pluck out their eyeballs and swear off reading for all time; she wondered if the author's word processor had an obsessive compulsive disorder and had to repeat the same phrases over and over again; she wondered if the sickening silver of the shiny moon would infuse their hearts with the love they felt toward Annie and make them howl in unison at the crack of dawn every day.)

And the worst thing, the absolutely worst thing, about the book was that you really, really didn't care about the characters by the time you get to the end. Except to maybe wish foul things upon them and then have to feel some guilt for that. The Beautiful Ms. Bonnie thinks we all tend to feel enough guilt in life, without having murderous-thoughts-toward-fictional-characters guilt and life is just way, way too short to waste on crappy books.

She gives this book two paws down and the BackYard Cleanup Award.

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### **Carla says**

I'm more than half way through this book, but I am giving up on it (which I don't do often). The concept is ok, and I like the progressive thinking, but the book is so overwritten and repetitive that I probably know what's going to happen, just like the omniscient Annie, who "knew" what would happen when she asked her best friends to travel together to scatter her ashes around the country. The story is a tear-jerker, but it's predictable and I am tired of being hit over the head again and again by what's going to happen. It takes any joy out of the story when things actually happen. The action is written almost as an afterthought. I feel like I'm pretty tolerant of imperfect writing, I read tons of romances, but this sentimental fantasy of these powerful women bonding leaves me cold. There is just not enough fun or learning going on for me to put up with the writing style.

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### **Melodie says**

This book was just what I needed to give me a much needed lift. And it did, but there were a few problems. Annie Freeman, before she succumbed to cancer, set up her own funeral. She set up five of her friends with all they would need to mourn and celebrate her life all the while traveling the country.

Each of her selected friends came with their own emotional baggage. Annie knew this and set it up so that her friends would have some growing moments amid all the travel and festivities.

I loved the premise, the empowering of women who get stuck in their lives. But I found the writing to be too glib, too easy to wrap up with a nice bow. I would have liked to see some honest to goodness conflict between these women. After all these were women who really did not know one another, but aside from occasional hints at squabbles,(someone taking too long at the bathroom sink)it was all one big love fest. The writing style to me was unattractive.

This was my introduction to Kris Radish. I have more of her work on my to read list. I hope I enjoy those more.

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### **Frani says**

After slogging through the first 113 pages of this book, I decided to put myself out of my misery, and leave it unfinished for all time! I was thoroughly annoyed with the author's overwrought and repetitive writing style, and found myself in a near-catatonic state while reading many of the paragraphs. The characters, including Annie, seemed sketchy and too similar...and, I just didn't find them interesting, let alone care enough about them to find out how they interacted. I was immediately put off by Katherine, her Bali bra deconstruction, and interaction with the UPS driver...it all seemed too unnatural. Come on, what woman has ever found "the perfect bra" and failed to purchase it in multiples?! That should have been my first cue to call it quits on this book...

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