



Breathe and Release

Katherine Hayton

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Elisabet just woke with amnesia. The care offered to her by a husband she doesn't remember descends within weeks into aggression and violence.

Lillian lies hogtied in an underground cell. Forget about escape; unless she can manage the necessities of life she'll be dead within days.

Kristen lost her house, her friends, and her confidence when her parents separated. Now her injured stepmother has moved back in. Has she lost her memory, or lost her mind?

Will the secrets hidden in Elisabet's locked memory be enough to set them all free?

Breathe and Release Details

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From Reader Review Breathe and Release for online ebook

Kim says

Gripping psychological thriller set in New Zealand. Elisabet wakes up in hospital having been badly injured in a car accident and with no memory of events leading up to the crash or of her husband and stepdaughter; meanwhile, in an isolated cellar, Lillian wakes to find herself bound, hooded and alone. As Lillian struggles to survive and Elisabet tries to regain her memory in the face of abuse from her supposedly caring husband, the storylines gradually converge, finally concluding with an unexpected twist in the tale. Great storyline although the characters didn't completely come to life for me in this one but still 8/10.

Babus Ahmed says

Elisabet wakes up in hospital with no memory of how she got there, she doesn't remember her husband or step-daughter. However, in order to be discharged from hospital she needs her husband to provide care. Once home with him her memory is not triggered and Elisabet feels trapped with a man she couldn't possibly have chosen to be with, could she?

A very dark thriller with some blindsiding twists. This thriller pulls no punches in terms of pace but it took me a while to get used to Elisabet's perspective and for the first half of the book I couldn't fathom why she would put up with her husband. However, as I read on the mind that was narrating made more sense and this truly is a creepy thriller.

On the darkest side of dark psychological thrillers.

Petra says

I've read several books this year where the main female character wakes up after an accident and suffers from amnesia. "Breathe and Release" is based on exactly that situation. But the plot that ensues is totally original and unique. There are two storylines running concurrently. Elisabet who is trying to regain her memories after having been released into her husband's care. A husband she was separated from prior to her accident. And then Lillian who is being held captive in an underground cellar and left to rot.

There is a third point of view from Elisabet's stepdaughter, who is a typical teenager.

The lives of these three females intersect in a wonderfully sinister way.

There were some totally unexpected twists and I loved all the surprises right down to the ending.

The only thing that rather annoyed me were the numerous instances where pronouns got muddled up and third person narrative suddenly switched to first person without making any sense at all.

But if you manage to ignore these little issues, then you're in for a treat if you enjoy dark mysteries with unusual and not immediately likable characters.

Thank you to the author and the publisher for providing me with a complimentary copy via NetGalley in exchange for an unbiased review.

Jo says

I'm not sure that I actually 'liked' this book, but it was a compelling read and certainly kept me guessing right until the end!

Elisabet wakes up in hospital following a serious car crash, and her life has changed completely. She has lost her memory and has no recollection of her husband, her step-daughter or her previous life. All she knows is what she is told; that she and her husband are separated and divorcing, but until she has recovered following her accident she will be returning to live with them.

The story is sinister; the husband is aggressive and often physically violent towards Elisabet, and her step-daughter hates her, calling her the 'step-bitch.' Elisabet is a victim of domestic violence and cannot wait to get away, never quite understanding how she ended up in an abusive relationship in the first place! She expresses her concern for her stepdaughter, but there is no explanation as to why she is so hated.

Then we have Lillian. Lillian is caged underground somewhere unknown, bound with plastic tie-wraps with a paper bag over her head, given no food or water, and apparently left for dead. The reader is given no clue as to how long she has been there, where she is, or why. We do know that Lillian's survival instinct is strong, but will it be enough to get her out of there alive?

A woman appears briefly in Lillian's life, gives her some water, promises to call the emergency services, then disappears, and isn't seen again. Again, we have no knowledge of who the stranger is or why she is there.

'Breathe and Release' is an uncomfortable read. The reader is aware that something is not quite right, and at times the story seems quite confusing. There are lots of loose ends waiting to be tied. However, as the story is unravelled and the secrets are uncovered, it is actually a very sinister and frightening story about some people you really would not like to be left alone with!

I wavered about quarter of the way through the book as the loose ends seemed to be coming at me thick and fast and perhaps I wasn't in the right frame of mind to work through them. I'm glad I did though! The twists and turns of the plot resulted in an outcome I would never have predicted and was well-hidden virtually until the very end.

I give this book 4 out of 5 stars

Christine says

3.5 stars

I wish to thank Net Galley, Book Buzz and Katherine Hayton for a review copy of Breathe and Release in exchange for an unbiased review.

Breathe and Release is an intriguing novel set in New Zealand and written by indie novelist Katherine Hayton. The plot revolves around Elisabet, a woman who awakes in a hospital minus her memory; and Lillian, a woman locked in a dank basement cell and left to die. Elisabet is disappointed by the lack of love

coming from the man professing to be her husband and the teenage girl Kristin she is told is her adoptive daughter; and she struggles with trying to reestablish the relationships. Lillian thinks she probably deserves to be where she is, though her strong survivalist traits are keeping her alive...so far. How did they end up in their respective situations? Are their stories connected? Is there hope for either one of them?

The story is told from multiple points of view, which I liked. The characters, though not always likeable, are compelling and held my interest. I really didn't know where this story was going, but that is what kept me reading. There are little shockers here and there that kept the suspense going and a hell of a biggie towards the end, which is a real grabber.

My only complaint is that I wished for deeper backstories on Elisabet, Lillian and Kristin in order to better understand their thoughts and actions in the story. I knocked off a star because of this. There were also a few spots in the narrative where I got tripped up with whom a pronoun was referring to.

Overall, I enjoyed Breathe and Release and recommend it to those looking for a fast read with a captivating plotline. I would definitely read more of Ms. Hayton's works.

Elke says

'Breathe and Release' is another version of the "lost memory" thriller. Elisabet wakes up in a hospital, unable to remember anything about her past. But, of course, step by step she - and the reader with her - get to know what happened and caused her memory loss. As a parallel story, the reader learns about Lilian, who is held hostage and starving in a cellar, but desperately fighting to survive. As both plots and characters meet up and unite, I had a feeling I knew where it was finally heading, but the ending was a satisfying surprise nonetheless. There really was only one thing that struck me as odd, when Elisabet and Lilian got together too easily or unlikely.

However, throughout the book I was glued to the pages, eager to learn what happened and what role Elisabet really played. A well-written, fast-paced and highly original thriller.

(I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review)

Mandy says

I received a copy of this book from LibraryThing's Members Giveaway program. Brief plot spoilers may follow.

I've read a couple of amnesia-related books, but this one had a level of depth to it that set it apart from the others and I loved it. When Elisabet wakes up with amnesia, she wonders what I assume many amnesiacs wonder at some point, which is whether or not she was a bad person before her accident. The conflict between who she was before and after her accident are explained and explored, although not all at once, and the reader gets to figure out who they believe she was at the same time that Elisabet is figuring out the answers for herself.

At first, I was a bit confused because the different points of view going on in the story initially all seemed way too separated from the others to have any real relevance. As the story begins to unfold, however, everything really starts to fall into place and it paints every scene after that with an underlying sense of evil. Every interaction, every word, all of it seems to be overwhelmed by the disturbing truth of the situation. What I loved the most about this book is that just as you start to believe that you have the full story and the "good/bad" parties are firmly in place in your mind, your beliefs get shaken up. All you can do as the reader is enjoy the ride. I couldn't get a good read on any of the characters for awhile and for me it added on to the excitement of putting the puzzle together.

This story is twisted, layered and has a lot of depth. I loved it and have no complaints. It was well-written, it veered from the typical amnesiac story skeleton and really makes the reader question who they align themselves with throughout the book. It was dark and gritty without being overdone. If you're triggered by abusive or intense situations, this may not be for you but if you're okay with those things and like mysteries that you can't easily solve, I highly recommend Breathe and Release. Great job!

sue says

This is told in multiple viewpoints.

It was really hard for me to connect with this book, it doesn't take a lot to confuse me to try to put all this together took some doing.

It has some acerbic wit, direct and sometimes annoying.

It distracted me from the story.

As yet I have never DFN'D a book so I hopped, skipped and jumped through it reading what I thought were the 'important' bits.

Not very professional but hey ho, I wanted it to draw me in as I went.

My thanks to Katherine Hayton via Net Galley for my copy. I tried several times thinking it might be me, not the time to read it, wrong frame of mind, that sort of thing, but nope, just didn't work for me.

Wall-to-wall books - wendy says

Ho-ly Crap!!!! And I thought Stephen King had a twisted mind! Man, this author is good! You know a book was good when immediately upon finishing you do a search for other books by the author.

This book was SO suspenseful! ...and creepy and a little frightening. What a twisty turny sequence of events. Reading it was like going through a maze and not knowing what was around each corner. I could have easily read it all in one sitting if it weren't for annoying little things such as - dinner getting in the way. As it was TV had to take a backseat that night.

But... this book took such a tremendous turn that I was almost afraid to finish it. It was almost like I didn't really want to know!

Excellent character development. It was almost freaky the way you see into their minds. I could picture Elisabet at every single scene. Even the minor characters came to life for me.

This story had such a creepy plot to it I would love to see it as a movie!

Here are a few quotes -

"The only memories no one expected her to recall were the events directly leading to the car accident. Which was a pity because that was the only area Elisabet would like covered. Why was she driving alone on an empty road nowhere near her house? Why did she drive into a pole at full speed?"

"Pretend you're a contestant on Survivor, she thought as she put it into her mouth and squeezed it between her teeth until it popped. Or, it's a detour on The Amazing Race, and if you get through this you're in the running for a million dollars." ~ as a fan of both of those shows, I loved this!

"She missed the old fashioned phone they'd had in the stupid state house in Burwood. She could slam that baby down. Pushing a button that gently vibrated under her finger to let her know she'd actually pressed it just wasn't the same." ~ LOL

Be prepared - once you start reading, you will not be able to stop! Definitely one of the more amazing books I have read this year - this will go on the list as one of my favorites.

I am not finished with this author - that's a promise.

Thank you! Katherine Hayton for sending me a copy of your book for my honest review.

Karen says

It's no longer surprising that certain "scenarios" seem to be duplicated in a rush of books - and amnesia and/or dementia causing memory loss is the one that has been showing up a lot recently.

BREATHE AND RELEASE is by New Zealand based Katherine Hayton, and in this case, the memory loss is as a result of a car accident, and there's a complication. Another woman is trapped in an underground hell, unable to escape, barely alive. Readers would be forgiven for assuming that there's going to be a connection between Elisabet and Lillian, although what the connection is might not be quite as obvious.

The narrative moves backwards and forwards between both women, each of whom seems to be reacting to their situation in similar ways. Elisabet awakens in hospital with very flawed memory and finds herself placed in the care of her ex-husband and step-daughter. It quickly becomes apparent that all is not well with this scenario so a large part of whether or not this book works for you, revolves around whether you're comfortable with the whole setup. Somehow, something didn't quite feel right for this reader with a little too much predictability in some areas, way too much convenience in others and some odd sidebars, such as the bad-tempered sulky step-daughter that just seemed to lead nowhere.

Meanwhile Lillian in the cellar is obviously in extremis when the reader first comes to understand her

capture. The way she is hogtied, the physical extremity of her situation, the sheer terror that result starts out believable and frightening, and yet somehow Lillian manages to show through that with a surprisingly calm and almost low key delivery. It might be that there's something slightly tongue-in-cheek about much of the dialogue (internal and external) from both women that will again be something that different readers have a particular reaction towards.

As the story revolves around the character of Elisabet her behaviour, reactions, voice and reasons are the main viewpoint through which the reader has to understand her situation. Even allowing for initial memory loss, as recollection starts to return to Elisabet, her reactions are somehow slowed or dulled. Even to the point of physical attack and threat, she seems somehow oddly glib and dismissive, her voice remains strangely upbeat and ever so slightly light and silly on occasions. Even allowing for something not quite right about her personality, and the scenario of the woman in the cellar, there's something here that might be seen by some readers as sinister, although it can easily be mistaken for very peculiar detachment.

There are certainly red-herrings aplenty in the plot of **BREATHE AND RELEASE**, and with books of this style there will be readers who love this, and those for whom it's less successful. Certainly the idea of victims under extreme threat, and the knowledge that safety is in the hands of somebody who has no idea they are in that position is an interesting aspect to explore. **BREATHE AND RELEASE** has a go at that exploration in a unique manner and tone.

<http://www.austcrimefiction.org/review/BreatheAndRelease>

JoJo says

Elisabet wakes up in the hospital with amnesia after a car accident and she struggles to find anything to trigger her memory. Her own husband, Greame, and step=daughter, Kristen, are strangers to her. She does not know her own identity: who her family is, what her occupation is (if any), and where she even lives. It isn't until after she is released from the hospital into the care of her husband that the adventure to find her memories begin. "Now she just had a choice to make. She had the person she had woken up as, the one who had nothing except a garbled opinion of her own self-worth. Elisabet also had the person she was, the person she had been, until a faulty turn and a cabbage tree wiped her slate clean".

This book was a thrilling and adventurous book that threw a huge game-changing surprise just when I thought that I had the book figured out. The voices of each character are very distinctive and therefore the different perspectives between Elisabet, Kristen, and Lillian work very well. My expectations of each character took abrupt turns throughout the book and it kept me at high attention. 4/5 stars, only because there is one aspect between two of the women (keeping it vague to prevent spoilers) that I didn't fully understand how it worked into the novel. I highly recommend this book for those who like a thrilling mystery. There is violence, language, and brief sexual references, a heads up for those who are offended by those.

"So maybe her choice doesn't need to come now. Maybe she can make it after she arrives... Maybe it'll just be a choice that stays in the back of her head until she dies, unchosen."

Please note: a copy of this book was generously provided by the publisher via NetGalley.

Celeste says

Elisabet just woke with amnesia. Lillian lies hogtied in an underground cell. Kristen lost her house, her friends, and her confidence when her parents separated. Will the secrets hidden in Elisabet's locked memory be enough to set them all free?

When I read this my interest was immediately piqued. The story itself runs concurrently between Elisabet and Lillian, with Kristen's added view point running alongside but to a much lesser degree.

The story begins with Elisabet waking up in the hospital, remembering only her name and not much else. Her thoughts regarding other people are honest if not likeable and made me wonder what sort of person she was prior to her amnesia. She finds out she has a almost ex husband and a step daughter and is released into their care. Even with amnesia Elisabet is a strong character. In the midst of her husbands' abusive behavior and her step daughters' anger she keeps pushing to find out more about herself and what I most admired was her ability to not turn into a victim.

Lillian is trapped. Her story begins with her tied up in an underground cellar with a bag over her head, no food, no water and all alone. No one knows where she is and the only person who can help her currently has amnesia. Lillian is easily the most likeable of the characters. She seems genuinely nice, just a good person caught up in a bad situation. She is resourceful and wouldn't give up even in the face of, let's be honest, completely shit odds.

How the lives of these women are related to each other will shock you. As well developed as they are, you will care for them, you will cheer them on, but most of all, you won't know what hit you.

Well written, great if somewhat unlikeable characters, a twisted and dark storyline, this book is definitely something I enjoyed and I can't wait to read this author's other books.

I received a free copy of this book from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Jamie says

4stars. First time reading a book from this author. Well written . Unlike any other book I've read. Glad I stuck with it. Keeps you guessing but then comes together nicely.

Lynn McCarthy says

Elisabet has driven into a tree and ends up in hospital but when she comes around she cannot remember anything of what happened in her life before the accident.

When Elisabet is released from hospital her husband Grahams takes her home and Elisabet finds out that her and her husband were separated before the accident and the home where she is now is not her real home. As bits come back to Elisabet she keeps seeing a girl being kept captive underground in a cellar.

A few miles away Lillian is being kept captive in the same place Elisabet keeps seeing in her mind how did she get there? does Elisabet know the women?

Kristen doesn't like her step mother that much but Elisabet tries to be a good step mother to her while she finds out her husband is a bully.

I never got the ending at all it was a complete surprise what a gripping thriller.

Thank you netgalley Katherine Hayton and the publisher for a chance to read this book.

Sandy *The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice* says

The author of Breathe and Release is described as a shy reticent genius. They may well be right.

I have to admit to not liking this book much when I began it. It is not the easiest read. It is written in a detached terse manner with a certain amount of acerbic wit. But neither could I put it down. It is compelling. Almost addictive. I liken reading it to being a passenger in a car speeding down a winding road in the middle of the night with no headlights.

Scary.

Exhilarating.

There are four main characters: Elisabet, who wakes in hospital following a car accident with absolutely no memory;

Graeme, Elisabet's husband, Kristen's father. The instigator? Or a victim?

Kristen, Graeme's 17 year old daughter, Elisabet's step-daughter with whom she has a hate-love-hate relationship ;

And Lillian, imprisoned in a cell in a basement, and about whom Elisabet has recurring dreams.

I have never read anything quite like this book. I am still not sure I can say I enjoyed it. But it was one hell of a ride.

Thank you to author Katherine Hayton via Netgalley for providing a digital copy of Breathe and Release for review. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own.
