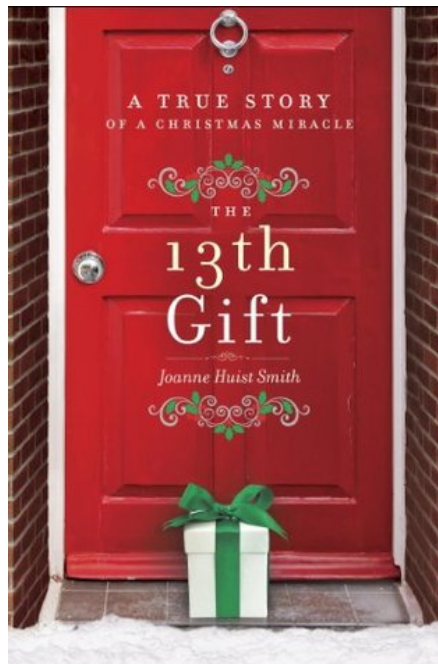




The 13th Gift: A True Story of a Christmas Miracle

Joanne Huist Smith

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For readers of Richard Paul Evans and Greg Kincaid comes *The 13th Gift*, a heartwarming Christmas story about how a random act of kindness transformed one of the bleakest moments in a family's history into a time of strength and love.

After the unexpected death of her husband, Joanne Huist Smith had no idea how she would keep herself together and be strong for her three children--especially with the holiday season approaching. But 12 days before Christmas, presents begin appearing on her doorstep with notes from their "True Friends." As the Smiths came together to solve the mystery of who the gifts were from, they began to thaw out from their grief and come together again as a family. This true story about the power of random acts of kindness will warm the heart, a beautiful reminder of the miracles of Christmas and the gift of family during the holiday season.

The 13th Gift: A True Story of a Christmas Miracle Details

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From Reader Review The 13th Gift: A True Story of a Christmas Miracle for online ebook

?Susan? says

This was a very heart wrenching book based on a true story of love, loss and a journey of the heart.

Shannon (leaninglights) says

Full review: <http://leaninglights.weebly.com/home/...>

First impressions:

This book is beautiful. It is the perfect story to pick up this time of year. It's the story of great loss, darkness and eventually hope. I needed to hear it and I'm so glad I picked it up. Kindness and compassion are what the Christmas season is about and this true story about a grieving family is a wonderful reminder of that. I highly recommend!

Lily Pis says

Avete presente quando all'inizio di un libro ancora dovete conoscere i personaggi, dovete immedesimarvi e "ambietarvi" alla storia? E arrivata a fine lettura avete dimenticato molti dettagli che c'erano all'inizio del libro? A me capita la maggior parte delle volte ma questa mi ha sconvolta. Solo alla fine del libro mi sono resa conto che era autobiografico! Gli autori spesso giocano sul finto autobiografico e pensavo che lo fosse anche questo. Immaginate quindi la mia sorpresa ai ringraziamenti. La storia già mi aveva toccato profondamente, scoprire che non fosse finzione mi ha sconvolto ancora di più. Che altro dire se non leggerlo. Sono felicissima di aver deciso di leggerlo e soprattutto di concludere l'anno con esso.

La maggior parte di noi è segnato da un lutto profondo. Questo libro riapre e rimargina quella ferita con una dolcezza incredibile. Bellissimo.

Barbara says

This was 2 1/2 stars for me but in the Christmas spirit I bumped it up rather than down. If it weren't based on a true story, I'd have disliked it. I was impatient with the whole idea that a family who loses the dad 2 months before Christmas should get on with their grief and celebrate. Really? This family needed help! Also unexplained was how they were going to get by on one salary now with 3 kids. Not even the teenager had a job. The mom appeared to work part time and after generous donations of money from folks seemed to splurge it all on Christmas. Really? I have a well paying job but I would never go on that kind of shopping spree. Pretty unbelievable even though it all happened 15 years ago.

Christine says

Christmas is still over a month away, but I needed a "feel good" fix, and this one fit the bill nicely. The 13th

Gift is actually a nonfiction story about a family falling apart after the husband/dad suddenly dies a couple of months before Christmas. The wife/mom/author Joanne Huist Smith is having a hard time gathering any Christmas spirit (or spirit for much of anything) as are her two sons, aged 12 and 17. Only her 10-year-old daughter Megan, mature for her years, wants to celebrate Christmas. Not until little gifts and notes set to the theme of The Twelve Days of Christmas began to show up on their doorstep do they begin to feel the possibility of healing. The last chapter, titled the 13th gift, is an epilogue written 15 years after that remarkable Christmas when the author is finally able to finish the story--a perfect ending.

This is a story of profound loss, grief, hopelessness, and family breakdown. It is also about love, hope, inspiration, and the rebuilding of family. Ultimately, this is a book about offering kindness and compassion to those who are hurting. There is so much potential for goodness in man. It is something we yearn to see this time of year, especially in the world we live in today. I highly recommend The 13th Gift.

Kathy Worrell ? says

The 13th Gift leaves you with a big lump in your throat and these words in your heart:

"I tell them one of the greatest gifts we all possess is the ability to give.....And, the Holidays are a perfect time to look outside of ourselves and be a true friend. A legacy of generosity can create memories that reverberate beyond the moment and outshine the brightest of heirloom ornaments."

SheriC (PM) says

Ugh. Within about 5 minutes of listening to this audio, I could only wail Nooooooooooooooooooooo. I didn't expect much from this one, so the bar was set pretty low. I expected a bit of light Christmas glurge, a memoir about a family dealing with the loss of a loved one, who found their Christmas spirit when their friends/neighbors/whatever got together to leave anonymous gifts to remind them of The Meaning of Christmas. Sounds like the perfect story to get you into the season, if you go into it without a cynical heart. I was even willing to overlook the amateur quality of the audio narration, because it's a memoir read by the author. But I simply could not overlook its pushing my biggest button with respect to writing style, the dreaded First-Person-Present-Tense, further committing the egregious sin of mixing past tense inner monologue directly in with the present tense narration of story events. No. Nope. No way.

DNF at 5%. Ordinarily I wouldn't rate a book after less than 20 minutes of audio time, but FPPT always gets a 1 star from me unless the writing and story are so fantastic that I don't even notice it enough to be annoyed by it.

Audiobook, borrowed from my public library, read by the author.

I was attempting to read this for The 16 Tasks of The Festive Season, square 4: Book themes for Thanksgiving Day: Books with a theme of coming together to help a community or family in need. –OR– Books with a turkey or pumpkin on the cover. I don't have any other books lined up for this task, so I might have to use my other Light Joker for it.

Abi Riley says

I'm a big fan of true stories, and this one did not disappoint. Every night I would read a chapter of The 13th Gift. Though I wanted to read further, I closed the book and placed it on my bedside table. I wanted to experience each day with the Smith family while they coped with the sudden loss of a family member. Each day brought a new surprise for the Smith's. I enjoyed the slow shifting from blanketing grief and the dread of another day, to anticipation curiosity and the true spirit of Christmas.

I ached for this family, sometimes to the point of a huge lump in my throat. I couldn't imagine my children growing up without their father, or I without a husband to help me raise our family.

The fact the Smith's lost their father/husband shortly before Christmas—a holiday meant to share in so many ways—made it that much harder to deal with—especially for the mother (and author), Joanne.

The healing throughout the book, of both Joanne and her three children is touching. The story brings a whole new meaning to the concept of Secret Santa and paying it forward.

I highly recommend this holiday read.

Disclosure of Material Connection in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: BloggingForBooks has provided me a copy of this book in exchange for a review.

Ruth says

How do you keep putting one foot in front of the other when the rock of your family has passed away and Christmas is around the corner? Days seem dreary and energy is lacking for Joann and her kids. Their grief is pulling them under and they can't seem to find a way back. Joann wants to just forget about the holidays but the youngest, Megan, seems determined to have a Christmas tree in their house.

On the run to try and get to school on time one morning, they discover a poinsettia plant on their front porch. Along with the plant is a card. The card has a revamped verse for the Twelve Days of Christmas. Angry at everything, Joann just wants to throw it away but Megan saves it and encourages her mom to keep it. The next day, another gift arrives. They all soon become wrapped up in the gifts that arrive each day and whether they will be able to solve the mystery of who is sending them and how they do it without being detected.

This true story is heartwarming and shows how people can do small acts of kindness that can mean much more than they can imagine to the recipients.

Lesia says

This year, it was a nonfiction Christmas book that made me cry. Joanne Huist Smith's The 13th Gift is "A

True Story of a Christmas Miracle". And, it's Smith's own story of family tragedy, and the love that brought a family back together.

Joanne Huist Smith lost her husband, Rick, in October 1999. He had put off heart surgery, hoping to be home recovering when the kids were home on Christmas break. But, his heart didn't make it to Christmas. And, then Smith couldn't find the heart to face the holiday she always loved. In fact, she didn't know how to face her children, Megan who was 10, twelve-year-old Nick, and seventeen-year-old Ben. Instead, the family was falling apart. No one knew how to cope, and the upcoming holiday didn't make it easier. And, then twelve days before Christmas, Megan found a poinsettia on the porch.

Attached to the poinsettia was a homemade card, "On the first day of Christmas your true friends give to you, one Poinsettia for all of you." Smith was angry at the intrusion, and then convinced she knew who the giver was. But, Megan was intrigued. She was young enough to still see, and want, the magic of Christmas. And, it took an anonymous stranger to reach out to Megan. As gift after gift appeared, Smith continued to reject them until she saw the changes in her children, and heard Megan whispering out an open window, telling their "true friends" that the gifts hurt her mother.

The 13th Gift is the story of a true miracle as a family came back together, and found joy in Christmas, despite their sorrow. Most important, they found the ability to reach out to others, to care again, instead of locking themselves in separate rooms as they grieved for the husband and father they all lost.

Smith, who had been a reporter for the Dayton Daily News, knows how to tell a story that rips at the heartstrings. She makes the reader care about her, her family, and the anonymous true friends. The 13th Gift is a Christmas story in the best tradition, one about changed hearts and lives. And, it's all the more special because it's true. It's a perfect story for the holiday season, a story of love, generosity, and giving from the heart.

The website is www.13thgift.com

Silvia Devitofrancesco says

Joanne è una giovane vedova che non ha ancora superato il trauma provocato dall'improvvisa morte dell'adorato marito Rick. La famiglia è in balia di se stessa e la giovane madre non riesce a badare ai tre figli. A tutto questo trambusto si unisce il Natale imminente e il desiderio della piccola Megan di abbobbare la casa, decorare l'abete e preparare il cenone. Il 13 dicembre dietro la loro porta compare una stella di Natale e un biglietto firmato "i vostri veri amici". La reazione di Joanne è terribile... I giorni passano e i regali continuano a essere recapitati. Uno a giorno per coprire i tredici giorni d'attesa natalizia. Si tratta di piccoli pensiero a tema natalizio ma sulla famiglia hanno un effetto incredibile. Ognuno reagisce, lotta per superare il dolore e per guardare avanti, forte dell'appoggio di questi eroi. Tra il dolore e le lacrime appaiono i sorrisi e soprattutto una nuova consapevolezza che ha il sapore della rinascita, poiché anche se nel cuore resta il dolore, si può essere felici.

"Uno dei doni più grandi che tutti possediamo è la capacità di donare. Non serve essere facoltosi. La compassione e un cuore buono sono tutto ciò che serve. Quale modo migliore per onorare i nostri cari, anche quelli che non ci sono più, di aprirsi e cambiare una vita per il meglio? E le feste sono un momento ideale per guardare fuori da noi stessi, per essere veri amici. Una tradizione di generosità può creare ricordi che vanno oltre il momento contingente e che luccicano più di qualsiasi decorazione."

"Il tredicesimo dono" è un libro che entra nel cuore. Sviluppa una tematica forte e apparentemente in antitesi

con la leggerezza del clima natalizio, tuttavia Natale è anche questo. Non sono solo regali, luci, alberi addobbati ma anche dolore e sofferenza quando si prende coscienza del fatto che una persona cara non può sedersi attorno al tavolo la sera della vigilia.

Joanne è una donna da ammirare. Distrutta, ella reagisce, per il bene dei figli, certo, ma anche per il proprio. Al pianto segue il sorriso, al dolore un barlume di speranza. Joanne, ovviamente, non dimentica Rick, anzi. Quei toccanti ricordi dei momenti trascorsi insieme che all'inizio della narrazione erano per lei causa di atroci sofferenze diventano ora spunti per ripartire, trampolini di lancio verso la serenità.

Il messaggio di fondo del libro è proprio questo: avere speranza. Joanne e i suoi figli non demordono, si affidano all'affetto di persona sconosciute e al calore della famiglia per farsi forza.

L'autrice si serve di uno stile semplice ma efficace. Il periodare è sciolto, la narrazione è intervallata da numerosi dialoghi e il ritmo è incalzante, capace di tenere il lettore col fiato sospeso.

Il lettore non può fare a meno di commuoversi e nella commozione riflettere. E' un invito a non mollare mai, a non credere che col lutto sia tutto finito e ad avere fiducia in quanti ci sono attorno.

"Il tredicesimo dono" è, indubbiamente, un libro che lascia il segno. Come già detto, non si tratta del tipico romanzo d'evasione da leggere sdraiati sul divano dopo una giornata di shopping pre – natalizio ma è una sorta di manuale di sopravvivenza, una lezione di vita, una guida nei momenti bui.

Carol says

The Hook - I try to read at least one new Christmas themed story each year. The 13th Gift: A True Story of a Christmas Miracle, a memoir was popping up everywhere and somehow popped right into my hands.

The Line – *"We're not falling apart; we're just chipped a little bit."*
You will have to read the book to understand the relevance of this quote.

The Sinker – Such a perfect story for this time of year, The 13th Gift: A True Story of a Christmas Miracle brings so many truths of the spirit of the season to mind and validates the goodness of man.

The Smith family; Jo, Ben, Nick, and Megan have lost the glue that cements them. Their father, Rick dies just before Christmas in 1999. A special group of *true friends* parodies the words in the classic Christmas song *The 12 Days of Christmas* and secretly gifts the Smiths' with presents each day. Nothing profound, but interesting presents beginning with a Poinsettia on the first day. A written card echoing the song accompanies each. Coming and going secretly the kindness of strangers give this grieving family a spark to light the holidays and a belief in the possibility that they can heal.

The 13th Gift: A True Story of a Christmas Miracle, if not a true miracle is a heartfelt memoir which delivers in its spirit of the season. It is touching and confirms my belief in the goodness of people. The 13th Gift: A True Story of a Christmas Miracle, joins my list of favorite Christmas Stories, one to be read and enjoyed again.

Carolyn says

This memoir describes a family shocked and frozen at the death of their husband and father. Rick had died suddenly in October in his sleep of a heart condition and his family were not ready to face celebrating Christmas. The author Joanne, was not coping with her loss let alone coping with her childrens needs. They had all retreated into themselves and no one was talking about what had happened. Only the youngest child, Meghan wanted to put up a tree and decorations but Joanne couldn't find the energy to go and buy a tree and couldn't face doing any Christmas shopping. But something happens 12 days before Christmas - someone anonymous leaves a small gift on their doorstep. Gradually this leads to the family pulling itself back together to start rebuilding the future without Rick.

This truly is a remarkable story, in showing how simple small acts can make a difference to those who are grieving or suffering at Christmas. I enjoyed the aftermath of the story where Joanne talked about her efforts to find those responsible and discovered a long legacy of kindness.

Sharon Huether says

I won this free book from Goodreads first reads. A true story of a family after the loss of husband and father. They were inspired by the kindness of strangers and friends, following their loss. They followed the tradition that was gifted to them. A wonderful true story of Christmas.

Mariele says

In the interest of full disclosure, I want to preface this review by mentioning that I received this book as part of a GoodReads FirstReads Giveaway.

Overall, this book was cute. The premise is very heart-warming, and I loved the epilogue that gave more of a background as to the origin of the gift-giving tradition and the history of the gift-givers themselves.

I did take a bit of an issue with certain elements of the book. I just didn't find myself engaging with the characters at all, and I think it was because of the writing. The dialogue felt stilted, as though the author was trying too hard to use her best or most beloved phrases, even if they didn't quite fit into the story at that moment. It was a little bit like reading the efforts of an 8th grade creative writing class. Good, but not natural. It didn't flow to me. Every inch of this book felt like it was trying too hard to be something more profound or more moving or more interesting than the material actually was.

I also felt like a horrible person because I very quickly stopped feeling sadness about Rick and his death. I think a little more background on his life and death would have helped me feel more connected. I know the focus of this book is not about death, but more about the healing that follows the death of a loved one, but it made it difficult for me to stay interested and stay sad. There is only so much pity that I have to give as a reader, and this book exhausted me after about 30 pages.

It was a quick read that brings you down enough to lift you up again at the end, but it probably isn't anything I would read again. The characters have the potential to be likable and interesting, but they were written in a way that made them seem a little flat and one-dimensional.

