



Hunting and Gathering

Anna Gavalda , Alison Anderson (Translator)

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Prize-winning author Anna Gavalda has galvanized the literary world with an exquisite genius for storytelling. Here, in her epic new novel of intimate lives-and filled with the "humanity and wit" (Marie Claire) that has made it a bestselling sensation in France-Gavalda explores the twists of fate that connect four people in Paris. Comprised of a starving artist, her shy, aristocratic neighbor, his obnoxious but talented roommate, and a neglected grandmother, this curious, damaged quartet may be hopeless apart, but together, they may just be able to face the world.

Hunting and Gathering Details

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Author : Anna Gavalda , Alison Anderson (Translator)

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Elena says

Este libro ha sido justo el tipo de lectura que necesitaba en este momento, una historia muy bonita, real, como la vida misma, con unos personajes con una vida nada fácil, admirables. Es lo primero que leo de esta autora, pero no será lo último porque me ha gustado mucho su forma de escribir.

María Ángeles says

Tenía este libro desde hace dos años y nunca me decidía a leerlo... ¡mal hecho!

Es muy bonito. Las dos primeras partes son magníficas, porque no entiendes la relación entre los cuatro protagonistas del libro y las páginas vuelan entre las dudas de ¿qué le ha pasado? ¿por qué está así? ¿que tienen que ver "las churras con merinas"? (esta última pregunta parafraseando a Franck...

Camille me ha encantado, una chica bohemía calcadita a cómo me imagino yo a una parisina. Me gusta mucho cómo escucha a los que les rodea para captar su esencia, su ambición por aprender algo nuevo cada día y cómo disfruta de las pequeñas cosas. Philibert es el mejor de todos, aunque Mamadou no se queda atrás. Veo en Franck un representante perfecto de un chico de su edad, son así y ya está, y me cae bien; creo que a pesar de todo está muy centrado. Y Paulette es la típica abuela que todos tenemos!

La fascinación de Camille por el arte y cómo habla de sus pintores favoritos me ha cautivado; con Franck me han entrado ganas de beberme yo misma el consomé ("tres minutos en el microondas", fantástico); y la culpa de todo esto la tiene la autora de este libro, Anna Gavaldà, que con su forma de escribir me ha conquistado.

No será el último libro suyo que lea.

Voy a intentar ver la película, y si la consigo, en versión original. No puedo dejar pasar a Franck hablándome en francés!!!

Alba Turunen says

4 Estrellitas. Antes de nada me gustaría decir que éste libro no es el tipo de literatura que suelo leer, y quizás, si no me hubiesen regalado éste libro, ni lo habría leído. Vergüenza la mía, porque me lo regalaron hace tres años, y aún no lo había cogido. Por fin le he encontrado un hueco, y su lectura me ha dejado muy satisfecha.

Estamos ante una novela de corte sentimental, con cierto romanticismo, pero no, no es novela romántica propiamente dicha. Es un libro sobre cuatro protagonistas, cuatro personas que aparentemente no tienen nada en común, ni nada que ver entre ellos, pero que cuando se encuentran, la vida puede llegar a ser feliz, a ser algo más, y a estar completa.

Para empezar, tenemos a Camille, una joven artista cuya vida va a pique y no tiene fuerzas para salir adelante. Philibert, un aristócrata tímido y apocado que vive en un enorme piso de un barrio pijo, su compañero de piso, Franck, un rudo y malhablado cocinero, y Paulette, la abuela de Franck, que a su avanzada edad está sufriendo unos cambios propios de su etapa vital, para la que no será fácil salir.

Estos cuatro personajes se irán encontrando a lo largo de la novela, y regalarán algunas escenas muy tiernas y divertidas. Es un libro de superación personal, cómo gracias a las personas adecuadas puedes encauzar tu vida y ser feliz.

En cierto modo es un libro extraño, porque no estoy acostumbrada a éste tipo de literatura, me ha gustado cómo escribe Anna Gavalda, es su primer libro que leo, pero reconozco que al principio su estilo se me hizo un poco extraño, describía brevemente sucesos y conversaciones de los protagonistas, pero sin venir a cuento introduce muchos, muchísimos puntos y a parte, que me descolocaban bastante, pero a fuerza de pasar páginas me fui acostumbrando.

Otro motivo que me echaba para atrás es que es un libro extenso, tiene 650 páginas, pero he leído éste libro en cuatro días ¿Por qué? Porque engancha, engancha mucho y se lee muy rápido, los capítulos son muy cortitos, algunos sólo ocupan una página, y en un ratito te ventilas medio libro sin darte cuenta.

No descarto que lea otro libro de ésta escritora en el futuro, pero la buena impresión me la ha dejado. Creo que no tardaré mucho en ver la película basada éste libro.

Alexandra says

Was ich wieder mal für mich persönlich gelernt habe: Hüte Dich vor Büchern, die in der Werbung als bittersüß beschrieben werden. Wobei - ganz so dramatisch war es auch nicht, aber der Roman von Anna Gavalda war für mich nur äußerst mittelmäßiger Roman mit einigen Ärgerfaktoren.

Aber beginnen wir am Anfang. Also der Plot ist zu Beginn sehr wirrr mit inflationären entbehrlichen Szenenwechseln aufgebaut, die teilweise im Halbseitentakt daherkommen und dadurch den Roman dekonstruieren. Das fand ich extrem enervierend und machte mich ganz unruhig. Eine unnötige Qual, die nicht mal mit Qualität punkten kann. Gut dieses Stilmittel wird ab ca. 40% des Werkes obsolet, da die drei und dann vier Protagonisten beginnen, zusammenzuwohnen und viele Szenen gemeinsam zu haben.

Am schlimmsten waren eigentlich die Figuren, die waren mir wirklich viel zu bemüht kurios durchgeknallt

mit ein bisschen sehr oberflächlichem Seelenstriptease (Die Socken und die Unterwäsche bleiben aber angezogen) auf Pseudo-Tiefgang in der Untiefe getrimmt. Der stotternde Adelige mit feinen Manieren ohne Geld und mit großer Wohnung, der mit ein bisschen Schauspielunterricht seinen Sprachfehler korrigieren kann, nebenbei die große Liebe findet und sich von seinen Eltern emanzipiert. Der promiskuitive etwas ordinäre Koch mit leichter Bindungsstörung, der von der richtigen Frau dann schon zur großen Liebe kuriert wird. Seine ein bisschen demente Omi (Alzheimer kann sie ja nicht gehabt haben, denn das ist ernsthafter und kann nicht wirklich im Familienverband so nebenbei gepflegt werden). Und dann der größte Faux-Pas Gavalda, die magersüchtige Camille, die schon bis auf die Knochen abgemagert, nur die große Liebe braucht, um schwuppdiewupp ohne Therapie quasi von selbst zu genesen. Der richtige liebevolle Mann, der zudem noch Koch ist, heilt alles ? auch eine ernstzunehmende Krankheit. Was für ein billiges, zudem unwahres und sehr respektloses Klischee vor allem gegenüber jenen Personen, die verzweifelt mit viel Aufwand und ärztlicher Begleitung jahre- bis jahrzehntelang gegen diese Krankheit kämpfen. Und dann auch noch quasi als ein bisschen durchgeknallter Proband mit ein paar "Marotten" (ja genauso stellt sich die Magersucht dar, als kleine Marotte, die man aufgeben kann) für das Globuli der Liebe von der Autorin regelrecht vorgeführt werden - das ist extrem ungut. Ja so setzt Gavalda als Ingredienzien die psychischen und physischen Störungen ihrer Protagonisten ein - als bourgeoises Beiwerk, als kleine Durchgeknalltheit für ihren zähen Liebesintopf. Aber natürlich immer schön an der Oberfläche bleiben, denn das könnte ja sonst die Romantik zerstören.

Ach ja sprachlich sehr gut und eloquent erzählt, dennoch werde ich ums Verrecken nicht auf drei Sterne aufrunden, denn diese "Liebe heilt alles" - Attitüde geht mir sowas auf meine Eierstöcke.

Fazit: Entbehrlich und jetzt weiß ich wieder, warum ich so viele Probleme mit "typischer Frauenliteratur" habe. Diese Diskussion hatten wir @Semjon und ein paar andere ja vor ein paar Wochen.

Madeline says

This will sound weird, but it's true: some books don't need plots.

Hunting and Gathering is a perfect example of a character-driven novel. Nothing really monumental or dramatic happens, and instead the story is supported entirely by the four main characters. They are: Camille, a cleaning lady (or "cleaning operative") who lives in a tiny apartment by herself and doesn't eat; Philibert, an aristocrat lacking social skills who lives in Camille's building; his roommate Franck, a temperamental but talented chef; and Franck's grandmother, Paulette, an old woman terrified of being placed in a nursing home. Gavalda's writing style is simple and elegant, and her dialogue is amazingly well done. The ending of Hunting and Gathering is a little bit too well-wrapped up, but I didn't mind. All in all, a lovely story.

Stela says

J'essaie de trouver le mot juste mais je n'y arrive pas - le charme de ce livre est ineffable. Le retour à la simplicité narrative, peut-être? Les quatre personnages si vivantes bien que faits des croquis (c'est pas au hasard que Camille dessine)? Le je-ne-sais-quoi du tout? Elle parle de la vieillesse et de l'amour, de l'amitié et de la solitude et impressionne sans tomber en mélodrame, bien qu'elle ne se serve d'ironie non plus. La vie, c'est tout.

Jamie says

This book.

This book, this book, this book.

Sigh

It is lyrical in that way that only books translated from French can be. I rarely underline or highlight while reading fiction, but this book gave my pen a work out. It was just lovely.

The characters were complex and well developed and sweet. They were just so sweet.

It wasn't perfect, but it was just the thing. It was flawed, but still one of the best I'll read this year.

The biggest flaw for me was probably Philou's character. I don't like that he faded as Franck's character took over taking care of Camille.

Other than that? Brill. And I won't lie, I finished it on the bus last night and cried.

Steve says

Despite 1) several years spent in Indiana, 2) an unstinted enjoyment of meat, and 3) the fact that I at one time had a mustache (it was the 80's), I am **not** a Ron Swanson replica. To prove this point, I read a book set in Europe. . . France, no less. And it didn't even have one of those page-turning plots to drive it.

What it *did* have was a plenitude of French themes. Food, especially the fine dining variety, was foremost among them. Art was another. Cultural divides of the type pitting aristocrats against republicans also featured. Romance was another theme, but not in an entirely typical way. We all know about love triangles. Well, this was more of an appreciation tetrahedron, where the sides denoting closeness among the four main characters would vary in length at any given time. It seemed like the point of the book and the pleasure to be derived from it was in watching the tetrahedron change shape.

The points defining this geometric object were Camille (a cleaning lady or really more of a starving artist – starving from anorexia, that is), Philibert (gentle, awkward, and to the manor born), Franck (a talented chef but one with attitude – brusque, tired, and hurting), and Franck's grandmother (less self-sufficient than she'd like to be, good-hearted but not always able to give more than she takes). I wish that the "land of the misfit toys" reference wasn't so popular so that I could claim it as my own and apply it here. Anyway, these four interact in the ways real people do. It takes time and intermittent acts of kindness for the bonds to form, and it proceeds in fits and starts.

This is a quick read with plenty of dialog and a respect for the show-don't-tell approach to character development. It's strong on lifestyle, too. The author even sprinkles in a bit of philosophy, though nothing heavy. All in all it was a nice, light parfait; easy to consume even if not an omnivore's fill.

that's how I roll). I usually see so much room for improvement, or "had this been tweaked *just a bit...*"s, that I wind up wondering what everyone makes such a fuss about.

I don't wonder as much with this book. It's charming. It's heartbreaking in parts. It actually punched me in the heart a few times. You know how certain paragraphs in books can hit you somewhere inside you didn't even know existed? Yeah, that's what happened with this book.

There are four main characters - the starving artist, Camille; Philibert the aristocrat who lives in Camille's building; Philibert's roommate, Franck; and Paulette, Franck's grandmother. While the story shouldn't be told without any one of them, the only one I particularly cared about was Camille. Maybe it's because we're both of the womenfolk genre, and I could connect with her on that sort of level; but honestly I think it has more to do with how Gavalda wrote her. Camille is wonderful. I love the way she sees the world, and the way her art is an extension of her character. Everyone else in the story paled in comparison. I just wanted Camille.

Now this is where I get obnoxious: I see that 10 Goodreads members have shelved this book as "chick lit". I'm not attacking them for that, but it just doesn't fit the bill in my opinion. This might be because my own definition of "chick lit" is less forgiving than I think it is according to most of the readers of the world. "Chick lit" to me is fluffy - that's what I imagine when I think of a baby chick. Fuzz. This was deeper than that. This wasn't a fuzzy story. There are the occasional fuzzy elements, but Camille is not a chick. She's not fluffy. She's bones and grit and paint. She's not out to find herself a man, or even the right pair of high heels. I'm not sure she would know how to walk in high heels. (Something else she and I have in common.) Most characters in what I define as "chick lit" do not appreciate the beauty in an ugly knitted scarf. Camille could.

So I'm interested with that shelving, but I'm trying to ignore it. I just hate that someone might be led astray by that. I almost couldn't bring myself to read this because of that. But one of my close GR friends rated it so highly and I trust her judgment that I couldn't turn it down; and I'm so happy I pushed myself.

For the record, I do believe many readers are confused by "chick lit" and "women's literature" or "fiction by women writers". It doesn't help that so many are marketed so freaking insanely in order to garner readers.

What I'm saying is that this is a book that I think even male readers could appreciate. And I worry that the label "chick lit" could be a real turn-off for most.

I can't give this a full 5 stars because it really consists of more dialogue than I prefer. I often find that an easy way out; Gavalda, however, manages to throw in an occasional paragraph or few pages that are not as superficial as straight conversation, and for that alone I hung on.

Now, really. Can Gavalda write a book just about Camille? For me? Please and thank you.

All the valves opened and she blew her nose against his shirt, cried some more, letting go of twenty-seven years of solitude, of sorrow, of nasty blows to the head, crying for the cuddles she never had, her mother's madness, the paramedics on their knees on the wall-to-wall carpet, her father's absent gazes, the shit she went through, all those years without any respite, ever, the cold, the pleasure of hunger, the wrong paths taken, the self-imposed betrayals, and always that vertigo, the vertigo at the edge of the abyss and of the bottle. And the doubt, her body always in hiding, and the taste of ether and the fear of never being good enough.

That, right there. That's one of those sections that hit me somewhere I didn't know existed. You don't have to understand. That one is just for me.

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Laini says

Translated from the French -- I loved this novel about a group of isolated people who find in each other an odd kind of family. Highly recommended!

Leah says

This book was recommended to me by Jamie, and it was a perfect rec, thank you so much, lady.

Translated from French to English, *Hunting and Gathering* is a character - rather than plot - driven, slice of life portrait. Somewhere within these pages, the main character finds herself at a bookstore, pouring over a collection of the French cartoonist Sempe's drawings (as I best know for his work in *The New Yorker*.) As I read further, I began to realize: There it is. This book is like a Sempe drawing. It is graceful and gentle and detailed, despite looking right into the heart of something that would otherwise revolt or depress. Rather, Gavalda makes it seem as though the beauty in these characters is actually due TO their dejection. I appreciate this, because it really is our multi-dimensional nature that makes us human.

I admired Gavalda's approach in writing truth for her characters without ever showing judgment as an author- not even in the most subtle and unintentional way. This isn't easy, and takes trust on the author's part to just allow these personalities to unfold, even if they are sometimes ugly sides to show.

As a reward for her discipline, her characters really come to life, flaws and all, and allow the reader to develop a relationship with them as if they really are "friends", as the characters themselves grow to know and love one another. It is how we are in life: we understand each other as complex beings and recognize that this is what draws us together. Shared pain of past experiences, shared joy and frustration and kindnesses.

I fear that through this review, I could be making this story seem way too darling, when it is far from that sort of tone. I guess that is that *je ne sais quoi* (ha) that comes from balancing sentiment with the reality of

burden, as well as the candid sharp wit of dialogue, both between characters and in their internal conversation. The perspective is balanced, and never takes you too far to one side or another without bringing you right back. Such is life!

This book is now well dog-eared with pages I want to revisit, and I never do that. I guess maybe at the bottom of it all I read this book at just the right time. It was a great reminder that we is who we is, and everyone's just trying to do the best they can in this crazy world, while finding a little joy and connection to get through. I needed that.

Erin says

I was worried that once I finished this book I would be filled with sadness over leaving these characters. I was sad to put it down, but the overall experience was so satisfying that I would highly recommend this book to others.

Hunting and Gathering made me miss having conversations with my old roommate from France. The characters' manner of speaking is so different from Americans and refreshing. I was surprised to see American references like Shrek and Angelina Jolie here and there, but they only added to the realistic experience.

The book is filled with conversations from its four characters and is about how each of them change and grow over the course of time.

I'm looking forward to reading more of Gavalda's work now.

Irene says

Una historia preciosa, llena de encanto.

Sus personajes son peculiares pero a la vez muy entrañables...Un libro de relaciones humanas.

Llena de luz, esperanza y ternura. Camille es fabulosa, ella y las buhardillas de París.

Una delicia de Anna Gavalda
