

Sailing on an Ocean of Tears

Donna Kendall

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Reviewed by Olivera Baumgartner-Jackson for Reader Views (4/09)

Donna Kendall's "Sailing on an Ocean of Tears" is one of those books that truly makes you stop and think of the consequences of little acts we perform every day, sometimes quite mindlessly and unaware of a potential chain of effects we might have set in motion with one of them. It is a book that effortlessly shows us how very much intertwined our lives are and a book that makes one think there are no coincidences in life. More than anything, it is a book that reinforces my belief in the beauty and wisdom of "paying it forward" and just plain living right. If you do that, there is unfortunately no guarantee that all of your wishes and heart desires might be granted, but at least you'll know you've made a difference in some other person's life.

Isabella, an Italian restaurateur who has led her life caring for others, is about to close for the night, when she discovers a homeless woman behind the restaurant's dumpster. It is pouring rain; the woman is clearly in a bad shape, so Ruth takes her in, feeds her and offers her shelter. The homeless woman, Ruth, at first refuses what she perceives as charity, but slowly opens up to Isabella and the two become friends, sharing their life stories and memories with each other. Through one of those stories they discover that they have an acquaintance in common, an unfortunate Irish woman, Bridget, whose brutally abusive husband took her children away from her. Bridget has since returned to Ireland, but is about to come visit the United States again, and the three women meet again, setting in motion an incredible chain of events, righting a good few past wrongs and easing several minds.

While at first I wished for a more conventional "happy ending" for Isabella, I have to admit that nobody knows what would make somebody else truly happy and maybe what she ended up with was exactly what she wished for. I've greatly enjoyed "meeting" all three main characters and reading about their life experiences and the ways that have deal with their challenges.

This beautifully written, deeply compassionate book with exquisitely crafted characters and a compelling story would make a good gift for a friend whose soul is troubled or for one who has helped you through some bad times. Donna Kendall's "Sailing on an Ocean of Tears" is meant to be shared.