



The Scent of Lilacs

Ann H. Gabhart

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Jocie Brooke has never wanted for love, despite the fact that she hardly remembers her mother. Jocie's father, preacher David Brooke, has done his best to be both father and mother to his daughter. Even Jocie's spinster Great-aunt Love, who's slowly going senile, cares for Jocie in her own stern way. But in their small town of Hollyhill, Kentucky, painful secrets lie just beneath the surface, and inquisitive spirits discover surprising truths. There's a reason why Aunt Love hides behind black dresses and a stoic countenance. And David takes his morning walks not just for quiet solitude, but to wrestle with the past.

Full of stories of lost loves and the trials of small-town living, this heartwarming novel explores the journey of faith and family.

The Scent of Lilacs Details

Date : Published May 1st 2005 by Revell (first published January 1st 2005)

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Author : Ann H. Gabhart

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Genre : Christian Fiction, Fiction, Christian, Historical, Historical Fiction

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From Reader Review The Scent of Lilacs for online ebook

Laura says

Title: SCENT OF LILACS

Author: Ann H. Gabhart

Publisher: Revell

March 2013

ISBN: 978-0800730802

Genre: women's fiction

After the summer of 1964, life for Jocie Brooke will never be the same.

Life-changing events rarely happen in quiet Hollyhill, Kentucky, and when they do, they are few and far between. But for young Jocie Brooke and her family, they happen all at once during the humid summer of 1964. Though on the surface things are just fine, it seems like everyone in Jocie's life has something they're not saying, something they're hiding from her--and from themselves. As Jocie digs into her family's past, she stirs up a whirlwind of discoveries. Will she find the answers everyone so desperately needs? Or will her questions lead to truths better left hidden?

Combining unforgettable characters, true-to-life struggles, and the perfect dose of humor and nostalgia, this riveting story from bestselling author Ann Gabhart explores the very essence of new life and love.

SCENT OF LILACS is mostly written in the point of view of Jocie, with a few forays into the point of view of her father, David. Jocie is a prayer, though she believes most people don't even know what they pray, but her main prayers are for a dog, and for her sister—who disappeared seven years ago, with her mama. David is candidating to be an interim pastor at a church, but has little hope since he's divorced. He's also struggling with the town paper and Jocie who is asking too many questions that he can't – or won't – answer.

I wasn't sure whether to classify this book as contemporary or historical. It happened before I was born, so has kind of a historical feel, but the back of the book says contemporary. I finally decided on women's fiction. Either way, it is a character driven story, and one can't help but fall in love with Jocie and with her father, David. Even the secondary characters, Wes, and her eccentric great aunt Love are well developed.

If you love character driven books, you won't want to miss SCENT OF LILACS. It is a great read. \$14.99. 352 pages.

ASC Book Reviews says

I usually don't read books along these lines, but when I read the first page on Amazon I fell in love immediately. Ann Gabhart sucked me into with her way of writing and then further with the shocking twists, turns, and absolute surprises within. I was amazed at how many surprises came out in this one book. I loved it! I was always on my toes waiting to see what would happen to these characters next! While it is a coming of age kinda tale, with Jocie, Scent of Lilacs is so much more to! Learning that you don't always know all the circumstances about someone's past and how to trust in the Lord through thick and thin is the base of the

story, I feel. I wholeheartedly recommend this book. I love the character traits that I shared with Jocie which drew me closer to her character and Ann's writing and story is wonderful all the way through the end!! I can't wait to see what else Hollyhill has to hold and be told! :)

There are so many wonderful songs mentioned in the pages that I couldn't choose just a few so...: "Hound Dog" by Elvis Presley, "Love Me Tender" by Elvis Presley, "Sixteen Tons" by Tennessee Ernie Ford, "Amazing Grace//Bristol, Tennessee- November 1964" by Tennessee Ernie Ford, "In the Sweet Bye and Bye" by Soundtrack/cast Album, "Trust & Obey" by Chelsea Moon & The Franz Brothers, and "The Twist" by Chubby Checkers! :)

And finally I don't know why, or even if this song truly goes with Scent of Lilacs, but I feel led to pair Amy Grants "Better than a Hallelujah" with it. Read the book listen to the song and see what you think :)

John 14:1

~ASC

Brenda says

It's the summer of 1964 in the tiny town of Hollyhill, Kentucky. David Brooke's first calling is as a preacher, and he hopes to land the interim pastor position at the Mt. Pleasant Church His day job is working at the Hollyhill Banner, so that he can earn money to take care of his family. Thing is it had been seven years ago that his wife Adrienne left and taken his oldest daughter Tabitha with her, leaving their youngest daughter Jocie for him. The summer of 1964 sees several changes taking place in the Brooke family when his daughter Tabitha who is now twenty returns home. With questions that she want's answered Jocie decides to the only way to get those answers is to dig into a past that just might be better left alone. Will Jocie get the answers she needs and will it strengthen the Brooke family, or tear them apart?

I really enjoyed the way the author switched perspectives allowing us to see things unfold thru the eyes of Jocie as well as David. I really enjoyed the voice of Jocie, and her unwavering faith in God. I loved that she prayed to get a dog and she got Zebedee, a dog she said that no one would want. I could easily understand why Jocie would have questions about her sister, and the fact that she prayed that her sister would come home seemed so realistic. I really enjoyed the secondary characters in this story, their unique voices really kept the story moving along for me. Overall, this was a story that drew me in and wouldn't let me go. I love historical fiction, and when it's peppered with bits of humor, an inspirational message along with true to life characters I always hate seeing the story end. Fortunately this is just the beginning of The Heart of Hollyhill series and I for one can't wait to read the rest of the series.

A complimentary copy of this book was provided in exchange for an honest review.

Janelle says

This was a very unexpected pleasure. My husband got it as a freebie four years ago and it's sat on my virtual shelf since. When I decided to read it I thought I would struggle through the first few chapters and then give up and shelve it as dnf. But it turned out to be an endearing story, with humour, loveable characters and some

very deep and challenging issues. It just proves that you don't really know how you'll much you will enjoy a book until you start reading it.

Andrea Cox says

This author came highly recommended, but this particular book missed the mark for me. It tangled with my sensibilities in ways that I can't mention due to spoilers. Most of the large "secrets" were predictable to me, though they might not be to everyone. There were about a dozen expletives, especially speaking of an illegitimate child, as well as several replacement expletives and profanities. This book was filled with small-town melodrama but not the interesting sort, at least to me. It quickly became a slog for me.

Some high points I enjoyed: I really loved Wes. He was amazing and had a wonderful sense of humor. I liked Jocie and her innocence. Would that more children her age would be so naïve today! The way the main family banded together through hard times was quite enjoyable.

I have two more of this author's books, but I'm not sure yet if I'll give them a whirl.

Carol says

Ann H. Gabhart's writing sparkles in *The Scent of Lilacs*. When you finish this book, you will want to read all that she has written. Ann H. Gabhart shows so much love and care with her characters. So many times while reading I was wishing that I could actually meet them and talk to them!

The author brings the story of the characters in Hollyhill, Kentucky in 1964 alive and makes you hope that things will turn out alright for them. This story begins with Jocie Brooke, a thirteen year old girl who says one prayer for a dog to come into her life and another one for her sister, Tabitha to return home. Jocie narrates and we meet her unusual friend, Wes who has all sorts of stories of coming from Jupiter and her Aunt Love who spouts bible verses constantly but who is hiding her own tragic story. Then her father takes his turn in telling the story. He is hoping to be the fulltime instead of a temporary preacher. He loves both of his daughters deeply hides his pain from his wife's desertion of him. He thinks he has failed. We go back and forth the narrators and the pieces of the puzzle of this story fit so neatly.

There are plenty of quirky characters and all of them have their own secrets which spill out bit by bit through this story. There is humor throughout and the characters feel closer to each other as their private secrets are revealed. This is a tale of forgiveness and the building of love.

I recommend this book to all lovers of Christian fiction and everyone who loves the story of *To Kill a Mockingbird* as this book is about human values and love. This is a book that you will want to hug!

C. says

This is a story about a small town and some of it's residents. Jocelyn (Jocie) is a young teen who has had

some tough times in her short life. Her mother left her and took her sister with her when Jocie was just a small child. Even when her mother was there, she never wanted Jocie.

Jocie's father was different, though. He loved her even before she was born.

I really enjoyed this delightful novel that shows the true meaning of family, whether it be blood or otherwise. Ann (the author) creates some unique characters and covers a little bit of everything in her writing of this book. Jocie will win over your heart, Wes will make you laugh, Aunt Love will draw out your tears and Tabitha's situation will show that there is hope. David shows unconditional love that one would hope they get a chance to embrace with their family.

I wish there were a way to give 1/2 stars as I would give this book 4-1/2 stars.

Ann Gabhart says

My first inspirational fiction. At last, I think I found my writing home. Love writing inspirational fiction and had great fun writing Jocie's story. Wrote this book after a few years of writing disappointments and decided to take the age old advice "to write what you know." I knew small town life and country churches. So I came up with the daughter of a preacher/newspaper editor in the small town of Hollyhill. Then I let Wes drop in with the wild story that he was from Jupiter and fell out of a space ship on the way over Hollyhill. He added a lot of smiles to the story.

Charity U says

I enjoyed this one even more than I'd hoped to! The first half was easy reading, smooth, and overall a gentle, expectable story. Very well-written, the whole book was. But the second half! Wow, the pace really picked up as the story whipped through unexpected twists and turns, with even more unexpected stories and storms thrown into the mix. I couldn't put it down during that second half! So glad it was a Sunday afternoon, when I had time to finish it. :) I absolutely flew through reading like mad. I grew to really like and empathize with the characters, especially in that second half. I am so looking forward to the next book now! The end was complete enough to finish, but left the end open enough to allow for a sequel (or several). God has a prominent part in this story, but it doesn't feel forced, either into the story or onto you, the reader. I would definitely recommend this book! I'd wanted to read a Gabhart for a while, ever since I saw and loved the cover of Words Spoken True. Therefore, when this book came up for review I snatched it up – and I'm so glad I did! Great book.

******Revell supplied me with this book in exchange for my honest review. I was not required to post a positive review, nor was I paid in any way other than the book.******

Nancy H says

What a wonderful book! This story grabs your heart and won't let go. Thirteen-year-old Jocie Brooke of Hollyhill, Kentucky is quite a young woman. She expects things to go along as usual during her summer, but the surprises and unexpectedly revealed secrets just keep coming, until she isn't sure what to think anymore,

especially about her preacher/newspaperman father, her somewhat batty Aunt Love, the surprising return of her sister, the mother who ran away and who hated her since her birth, the grandfatherly Wes, and the young woman Leigh, who might just be in the running for the role of stepmother in Jocie's life. The story takes place in 1964 in small-town America, and Jocie is a delightful character that you hate to leave when you reach the last page.

Barbara Meyers says

I'd have given this book another star except for one thing which I considered a plot contrivance and it bugged me the whole time I was reading it. The wife/mother Adrienne (who never actually appears in the book but is a huge influence on the main characters) seems to have dropped out of the sky in this little town that supposedly no one ever leaves. The character of David meets her at his father's funeral...but why is she there? She's a hot 18-year-old so unless her parents or grandparents? dragged here there, there's no explanation of why she attends. David doesn't know her. He marries her the next day but there is absolutely no mention of her having a family in this little town. No one. Parents, aunts, uncles, a cousin or a sibling. She's just out there floating all by herself with no connection to anyone and I found that a tough sell. I grew up in little towns. This is not how they work. If she had no family, it would have been simple to explain to the reader, but it never was. Boo.

Sarita says

There were parts of the story I enjoyed, but it took me forever to read this. The story just didn't grab my attention. The point of view switched between Jocie, 13 years old, and her father, David. There was one specific section about Aunt Love's father which was difficult to read.

All in all found the story sweet but just okay.

Kristi (Books and Needlepoint) says

I was raised in a small town in the midwest and could really relate to Jocie and the pace of Hollyhill. Even though the book is set in 1964, they have many of the same struggles that people have today. Jocie is so innocent when the story starts. Her two biggest prayers are that God will bring her a dog and will bring her sister Tabitha home.

Seven years earlier, when Jocie was only 5, her mother left in the night, taking Tabitha, her older sister, with her. They receive letters from Tabitha, usually asking for money so she can come home and visit, but she never does. Jocie prays everyday that Tabitha will come home, and she prays for a dog as well.

One day out in the woods, a dog finds Jocie. He follows her home and she is smitten. She names him Zebedee or Zeb for short and sees that God has answered her prayers. Since he answered the prayer about a dog, she surely believes He will bring Tabitha home. And sure enough, within a few days, after being away 7 years, Tabitha shows up on their front porch - no longer a young girl of 13, but now a young woman of 20.

Jocie has always been full of questions, but now she starts to question what she knows to be her family's

history. As the truth starts to come out, will it make things better to know the answers, or should some secrets stay buried.

This book was originally published in 2005 and was rereleased with a new cover. I found it to be very engrossing and read it in one afternoon. It was a good lesson to me that even Christians can make mistakes, but we need to grow from every decision that we make, whether it be good or bad. I am looking forward to reading more books in this series.

Nancee says

This story takes place in small-town Hollyhill, Kentucky during the summer of 1964. Thirteen-year-old Jocie Brooke has two prayers, her dog prayer and her sister prayer. She has always wanted a dog, and she wants her older sister to come home. Her mother and older sister left for California when Jocie was five years old, and Jocie questions her mother's reasons for leaving her and her father. Jocie is bombarded with daily bible verses from her elderly aunt, and her father's friend claims to Jocie that he's from Jupiter, and tells her tales of his adventures on a spaceship.

Scent of Lilacs is an endearing and timeless story of family dynamics where untold secrets are revealed, and generational parallels surface. Ann Gabhart writes with wonderful insight into this rural community in small-town America. Her characters are realistic and represent an abundance of colorful personalities, from an eccentric "biker" who claims to be from Jupiter, to her elderly great aunt whose forgetfulness is cause for concern. I discovered I had read the book previously when it was originally published, but it was well worth a second reading. It's a story that warms the heart and restores faith in humanity.

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from BookFun.org and Revell for my honest review. All opinions expressed are my own, and no monetary compensation was received for this review. Thank you to Fred St Laurent at TBCN and Revell for making this review program possible.

Kristen says

In Ann Gabhart's *The Scent of Lilacs*, the first installment in the Heart of Hollyhill Christian-Inspirational novel series, this heart-warming story will tug at our heart string about faith and family. Set in the 1960s, for fourteen-year-old Jocelyn "Jocie" Green, she lived in Hollyhill, Kentucky with her single father and never knew her mother. When she asked God in a prayer for a dog, he delivered her a dog she named Zeb, who might be her friend Wes's lost dog. Then she prayed for her sister Tabitha to return home. Once again, God had granted her wish. Tabitha, at age twenty, returns at their doorstep. She haven't seen her sister in seven years, when she left with her mother to go to California. Since then, she had stuck to her father like glue and had her Aunt Love to help take care of her. Her father, David, was the interim pastor for the church and needed a vote to be the permanent preacher. But he had a problem, someone named Ogden Martin, who had it in for him and wanted him away. Meanwhile when Tabitha returns, she brought up a new problem of her own--she's pregnant and keeping the baby. And that cause of problem for David's position at the church. For Josie, she's getting to learn a lot more about the truth of her mother and the secret her aunt Love had kept close to her chest. Meanwhile, she ran away in a midst of a tornado brewing, and later learned what really makes a family and how God provides us all.

