



The Wishing Garden

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Savannah Dawson makes her living at an advertising agency, creating commercials that link milk consumption to true love. But when it comes to tarot cards, she isn't making things up. And she has never picked a bad card--until the Three of Swords appears in her own fortune one night, promising sorrow...and a letter from her estranged mother reveals her father is dying.

With her rebellious teenage daughter in tow, Savannah goes to Arizona expecting the worst. And her fears are confirmed. Her mother is as distant as ever, her father will never recover, and the secretive wood carver helping her father build his final wish is stirring up feelings she has no use for. But hope still has a fighting chance in the town of Prescott. As the summer air grows heavy with scents from her father's lush garden, Savannah will discover a whole new magic...the kind that grows--quite literally--on trees.

The Wishing Garden Details

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From Reader Review The Wishing Garden for online ebook

Snail in Danger (Sid) Nicolaides says

This is probably more like magical realism than fantasy per se, although I did find it in the fantasy section at HPB. I have mixed feelings about this book. Sometimes the characters seem wonderfully well-drawn; at other times they seem like walking clichés. And the ending was a little too pat. But it had its high points as well as its meh points.

Grace says

Sections of this book felt stilted, and portions of the plot just didn't seem to be consistent or believable, but the author made up for these flaws with an outstanding job at character development, and the occasional insight into humanity that just took your breath away.

Definitely recommended, despite its flaws.

Linda says

The character while they can be malcontents become endearing as you read this novel of relationships. I felt the main character that travels through the book, Savannah, struggles against all she conceives as bad or negative. Then the woman character takes a turn at falling in love with a man that murdered in a fit of passion. You will be surprised at the depth of her relationship with her teenage daughter. The author captures the essence of the mother daughter relationship so well I found myself taking quotes from the book to ponder regarding my own daughters. I did not want this book to end. Then even the ending was not what I expected.

Marion says

I stumbled upon Ms. Yorke's first book, "Magic Spells", in the library and picked it up merely because a blurb on the cover compared her writing to Alice Hoffman's. Well, Ms. Yorke has got Hoffman beat by a country mile! Her writing is fresh, passionate, sensitive and poignant.

I enjoyed every page of this story, which is ultimately about mothers and daughters, and read it again when I got to the end, that's how good the story was. I loved that she started each chapter with a picture of a Tarot card---this is the book that got me interested in Tarot. I'm looking forward to more books by this amazing author.

Tandy Parker says

While I did find this book entertaining, I also found it to be more than a little far fetched. That's not

necessarily a bad thing; sometimes we all need a bit of fantasy to fall into, and erase the realism & monotony of everyday life.

Jan says

Savannah Dawson loves advertising and viewing life as always have an upside. Can she sustain this going back to her dying father? With her rebellious teenage daughter? Somewhat bittersweet but positive overall with some tears along the way.

KimberlyRose says

2.5

I loved the tarot theme throughout this book--fascinating!--and I loved Savannah, the unique main character; I related to her cheerful, story-loving personality, her determination to see the best in people, to believe in picking yourself up and trying again.

There were too many stories going on, though, and I never really got deeply involved with anyone. Yes, they were all people involved in Savannah's life, but their povs diluted the power of Savannah's story. The tension was exquisite, but then it started to wear on my patience, and finally, the climaxes and resolutions were lackluster, brief and unsatisfying. The pacing and emotional depth was not maintained throughout: both wavered.

Worth a read if you're interested in a poetically written reflection on mothers and daughters, on long-term love dealing with palliative living, and on grief giving way to hope and balance.

Edit: I didn't find any magic-realism in the story at all--perhaps the other reviewers are referring to the auras that Savannah's daughter sees? Or the essence of spirits (long-loved but passed on partners) who seem to drift about various seniors at times? I don't believe that's magic-realism.

Audrey Dale says

A lovely and very touching book with complicated characters and a rich story.

Nicole says

I like the use of the setting. Arizona as a land of high contrasts. Phoenix being arid and harsh both in climate and in relationships. Prescott is less harsh but the setting for the final stop, the retirement community a place of final grace and renewal. San Francisco turgid, mysticism ridden, and the relationships are tangled, lost in the fog.

I would have liked the story better with less of the auras and goulies haunting. However the troubled teens were very believable.

The garden belongs to the main character's father. It is his dying wish to finish the bench and the planting that

forces the many people of the story to meet and deal with life issues as adults, no longer hiding behind traumatic juvenile years. Especially when the real children need mature guidance. Good ideas, not perfectly executed, but well worth reading.

Beverly Diehl says

Beautiful, poignant, inspirational, heartbreakingly lyrical. As Doug is dying of melanoma from the Arizona sun, he has hired Jake to build a custom bench, a last gift to his wife Maggie and his daughter Savannah. Savannah has brought his 15-year-old daughter Emma with her from San Francisco, and passes the time telling the fortunes of her parents' neighbors with tarot cards. There's a hint of magickal realism mixed in to her tarots, and a ghost that haunts Jake's cabin.

Almost every character has his or her own arc, and with the use of limited omniscient POV, we get to dip into many, many heads. We're in Savannah's head, and that of her daughter, Emma; we're in her father Doug's head, and her love interest, Jake's head. We are in Savannah's mother Maggie's head, to find out what makes her so mean and tough on the outside, we're in Emma's boyfriend's head and the sheriff's head, and even in a DOG's head, for crying out loud.

Yet it never felt overwhelming to me, nor head-hoppy, though it did mean that the character's internal voices were nearly identical in style, of always gorgeous. Describing the end of her marriage (Savannah):

"She and Harry sold their picture-perfect house which had a central vacuum system and his and her sinks, but never enough air."

From Emma's POV, about her boyfriend:

"He looked like one big ball of pain, so she kissed him again, harder, until he uncurled right into the palm of her hand."

There are elements that could be very triggering: Doug's physical deterioration is described in vivid detail, down to his humiliation at depending on someone else to clean his odorous body. The beatings endured by Jake's mother at the hands of his stepfather. Sex happens, but it's not particularly graphic.

Everything is described in very sensual terms, colors, scents, sounds, and the use of individual tarot cards as a header for each chapter is brilliant.

Carla Khoo says

This is a beautiful book, again, not one that I'd normally go for. It's about life, how it changes, how we lose people, how relationships impact us and how we ourselves change. But what I appreciated most about this book was what it told you about love - in all its fun, bumbling and unexpected forms.

I think it's fair to warn you that, if you've ever lost someone close to cancer and were around to see them deteriorate, you might find this a tough read. I lost my Daddy to cancer and I really think that Christy either had this happen to her too or someone close. The Wishing Garden opened some wounds for me, but it was therapeutic in some ways. Just prepare yourself for tears, peeps, but be brave, I really enjoyed it.

Sherrie says

This is a very good book. Also very sad. And very hopeful.

Gina says

I really wanted to love this book since it is similar in style to some of my favorite authors - Sarah Addison Allen, Alice Hoffman, etc. But the writing to me was just a notch below those other writers and the characters weren't as rich and likable. I enjoyed this book, but didn't love it.

Dixie Goode says

Several years ago when I was in a used book store in Gold Beach Oregon when I found this book laying on a shelf. It was marked as an Advanced Reading Copy and had no price on it, and the clerk had no idea what to charge me, so finally gave it to me for a dollar. I read it, and cried because the book has a woman who is an eternal optimist, dealing with the approaching death of her father, her resentment of her Mother, and the breaking down of her relationship with her daughter, as she finds love with a psycho who murdered someone and ran from the law.

My Dad was also succumbing to cancer and I needed the optimism and hope she was clinging to. I never read the final printed version so I don't know how close what I read is to what is available, but I reread it this summer and found that it is still one of my favorites. Magical realism, Tarot Cards, family dynamics and hope all in one fast read.

Kathryn says

What an amazing story about how a person can rise above their environmental influences and change: Whit from a violent gang background and Mary from a love starved upbringing due to a father who was a bigot and a husband who she married not for love but for similar interests. These two people were brought together to replenish a garden that at one time had brought Mary's mother joy. Now the two use the garden as a way to bring their shared love into one family. It is sad how our environment can influence for good or bad our perception of the world and ourselves.

Life doesn't always turn out the way you plan it. Whit had served prison time for his actions related to his gang affiliations. While in prison he changed with the help of some kind friends and the Savior's atonement. He drew a line from his past and to his future. When he got the job to revive the garden for Mary, he thought it was a miracle. The miracle became having Mary in his life. For Mary, there were some concerns with her initial attraction to Whit, first he was 10 years younger than her, next he was from a poorer, Hispanic community and she didn't see a fish and a bird could live together, next was her father's bigotry. She had just recently become a widow, when her husband and young daughter, Isabella were killed in an accident leaving her to care for Isabelle's twin and living under the same roof as her father only by necessity.

When love won out over all of the complications and Mary and Whit marry...they finally believe that life will be perfect, but that isn't to be. Mary's ailing father is shot in a home invasion and Whit is the suspect because of his gang affiliation, his past convictions and because he was having to move his family out because Mary's father had been informed of their marriage and living under his roof.

Adrienne, Mary's young adopted, Hispanic daughter never loses faith and makes a wish in the garden fountain daily till her wish is granted and Whit is granted home arrest till the trial. Mary also has another surprise, she is pregnant, when she thought that wasn't possible after not being able to conceive when she was married for 19 years. Emotions are running high and the trial arrives... Adrienne's testimony is what turns the case...her innocents in telling the judge that Whit was with her and Mary when they heard the shot convinces the jury of Whit's innocence. They are able to go home and be the family that they have always wanted with a healthy happy daughter, a baby on the way, Whit's mother who is cared for with her advancing alzimer's and of course each other.
