



The Greatest Gift

Rachael Johns

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A mother's wish, a woman's bequest, a family found?

Mother: Female parent of a child

Mum: The woman who nurtures, raises and loves a child

Radio host Harper Drummond lives for her glamorous career. Every day she meets fascinating people doing extraordinary things, but has begun to wonder whether there's something more for her out there. She's financially secure, happily married and loves her job — what more could she want from life? An interview with a childless couple prompts Harper to think about whether she could make a contribution. She and her husband, Samuel, know they don't want a child in their lives, but could she help someone else become a mother?

The childhood cancer that left Claire Beggs infertile doesn't matter to her husband, Jasper. He loves her unreservedly, and they are passionate about their thriving hot air balloon business in the Hunter Valley. Despite their contentment, Claire is desperate to have a child — she knows Jasper would be a brilliant father and doesn't want him to regret choosing her over a family in the years to come. An egg donor seems to be Claire and Jasper's only chance of a happy family.

Can they find someone who will give them the greatest gift?

The poignant, heartwarming story of a woman who wants nothing else than to be a mum, and one who never wanted to be a mother.

The Greatest Gift Details

Date : Published December 6th 2017 by Rachael Johns

ISBN :

Author : Rachael Johns

Format : Kindle Edition 354 pages

Genre : Contemporary, Fiction

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Download and Read Free Online The Greatest Gift Rachael Johns

From Reader Review The Greatest Gift for online ebook

Michelle says

beautiful, touching, heartbreaking and simply amazing storytelling.

Reviewing will be difficult, especially spoilerless.

This one touched me deep, well researched, well written and beautifully developed.

Review originally posted at: <http://bookgirl.beautyandlace.net/boo...>

Copy: Courtesy of the Publisher

Rachael Johns is a West Australian author that goes from strength to strength. I have read and reviewed all of her work; her early ebooks with Carina Press, rural romance, Mills & Boon and lately her move into Women's Fiction (or life-lit as she likes to call it). Johns is an author who has long made it onto my Must Have list so I was always going to read this book.

Thanks to Harlequin I was able to read it months early and I am glad that I did. The Greatest Gift is a sensitively written, and well researched, story of fertility and motherhood that also focuses on relationships, family and hot air ballooning.

Fertility can be quite an emotional subject and these days it's quite common to hear people lamenting the unfairness of it all. There are so many people out there who would give anything to have children and can't while there are so many children suffering with parents who don't deserve them.

The range of fertility issues faced by couples is quite broad and I think once you hit your 30s there's a good chance you have come in contact with someone who has fertility issues. Some issues need just a little help, some need a lot and there are people who simply will not be able to overcome their fertility issues without the help of a donor of some kind. In Australia those donors can be quite hard to come by, depending on the donor you need, and due to the laws in this area. Rachael Johns has done fascinating research to ensure that her tale is accurate and insightful, as well as captivating.

The Greatest Gift, I really have no idea where to start because this book was an amazing gift.

Harper Drummond is a successful radio host who loves her career; she's happily married, financially secure and loves her friends. Afternoons with Harper is a popular show with interview requests coming in constantly; allowing Harper and her producer Lilia to be selective about who they bring on the show. Harper's guests are inspiring and they give back to the community, the legacy they leave behind will be remembered and eventually it leaves Harper questioning the contribution she makes. She's popular, entertaining and empathetic and she is very good at what she does but we see her starting to wonder if that's enough. She's not feeling fulfilled which leads her to explore ways she might be able to make a difference, even if only in one couple's life.

Harper and Samuel are a power couple dedicated to their careers and though they are both very set in their decision not to have children, their reasons are very different. Harper is a character that we get to know intimately, throughout the novel she shares her history so we learn what makes her tick and why she has made the decisions she has.

Dual perspective story telling sees us also meet Claire, blissfully married and happily working in the thriving

family business. She thought she had come to terms with the idea of never having children but it seems that there is still an emptiness that she feels can only be filled by motherhood.

Johns has penned a tale that will touch many readers. It explores a range of different family dynamics from both ends of the spectrum and in between. Big families, small families, happy families and dysfunctional ones; they are all here and they go a long way in demonstrating how your family helps to shape you.

The Greatest Gift is a story of relationships, in all shapes and forms, from romantic relationships and friendships to working relationships and the bonds that form when strangers come together with a common goal.

The characters are relatable and realistic people with concerns that many of us face at one time or another. I felt for Claire, she tried so hard to avoid attachment because of her infertility until meeting someone who could convince her to take a chance and loved her enough that they could face anything together.

Harper is thirty-four and she starts to question the legacy she will leave. She knows she doesn't want children so what will be the mark she leaves on the world. I'm sure most of us can relate to some extent. That feeling you get that everyone around you is doing something with their lives, and what are you doing, what have you got to show for it. She is a character that I fell totally in love with; the growth and self-discovery she did throughout the novel was quite emotional to watch.

The Greatest Gift contains some unexpected twists that completely threw me, and broke my heart. The story line was travelling along quite nicely and then you get smacked in the heart with a sledgehammer, more than once. I was completely captivated from start to finish and I absolutely loved the surprises in store at the end. I had formed some theories about how I thought it would all end, I should have known that Johns wouldn't take the predictable route and I was completely wrong.

Once again Rachael Johns has written a story that will appeal to many different types of reader and it is clear that her talent is becoming more finely honed with every release. The Greatest Gift is a story of the best laid plans being laughed at by the universe. It is told with warmth and empathy as it deals with issues that have touched my life, and the lives of many I know.

This is a book that I wouldn't hesitate to recommend.

Amanda - Mrs B's Book Reviews says

*<https://mrsbbookreviews.wordpress.com>

Well known Australian writer and recipient of an ABIA award, Rachael Johns, is a storyteller who continues to spread her wings further, as she settles comfortably into writing for the women's fiction or life lit genre. The Greatest Gift, is a true gift to new readers of Johns and firm fans, such as this reader, it is one of my favourite novels of 2017, despite being a late entry! The Greatest Gift is unafraid to tackle some highly relevant and controversial contemporary issues such as IVF, egg donation and evolving forms of family. It is all wrapped up in an entertaining and poignant novel, featuring a set of wonderful characters that will be sure to stay in your heart.

The Greatest Gift begins with Harper Drummond, one of the leads of this novel. As a successful radio host, self confessed career woman but happily married to Samuel, children have never been part of Harper's plans.

When a particular radio segment she hosts gets under her skin, Harper begins to feel the urge to do something meaningful for a couple in need. It leads Harper to answer an advertisement put forward by childless couple, Claire and Jasper Lombard. The pathway to Claire becoming the mother she so desperately wants to be, along with Harper's gift of life is a hard road travelled, filled with sorrow, hope and joy.

It is hard to know where to begin writing my review for *The Greatest Gift*. This is a book I adored so very much that to find the right words to express how excellent a read this novel truly is has proved quite difficult! I will state straight up that I highly recommend *The Greatest Gift*, it is the perfect novel choice for all readers, those new and old to Johns work. It also immediately struck me as the ideal choice for a book club (it was book club's selection this month) due to the subject matter, themes and characters that fill the pages of *The Greatest Gift*. It will incite plenty of discussion and divided opinions on the main themes contained in this book.

For those not overly familiar with the process of childhood illnesses, infertility, IVF and egg donation, Johns approach to these topics was covered in an informative, comprehensive and sensitive manner. All bases seemed to be covered, showing all areas of these contentious issues. I came away from *The Greatest Gift* with a fuller appreciation of the effects of childhood illness, infertility, IVF and egg donation. It also made me appreciate my own fertility and pathway to becoming a mother, which paled in comparison to the lead character in this novel Claire's experiences. The way in which these elements of the book is written really does allow the reader to step into the shoes of the characters in this novel. I was comfortably able to consider how I would respond to and what lengths I would be prepared to go to in order to live a lifelong dream.

At the heart of *The Greatest Gift* are the characters that fill the pages of this unforgettable novel. The story is told from viewpoint of leads, Claire, Harper and Claire's husband Jasper. I immediately empathised with and genuinely liked Claire as a character. It took me much longer to warm to Harper and I will admit to be suspicious of her intentions to donate her eggs. I did think it was all a publicity stunt! Harper does redeem herself as the book progresses and in the end, I found myself caring deeply for her wellbeing. Especially after Harper's less than loving family history is revealed. Jasper, Claire's husband, was a fine leading man of the story. I enjoyed following Jasper and Claire's love story. Johns successfully embodies this male character in her latest novel and by the close of the book, I felt I knew Jasper as well as the women in the novel. Rounding off the character set in *The Greatest Gift* is a band of superb secondary protagonists. These include both the families of Claire and Harper, along with supportive friends such as Claire's dear friend Polly and Harper's loyal friend and work colleague Lilia. The only character I do not have kind words for is Samuel, Harper's husband, who gave me a bad feeling from very early on the piece. My reservations about Samuel were validated by his actions towards the latter stages of the novel. Each of these characters propel the story forward.

Another aspect of *The Greatest Gift* that I feel is imperative to mention is the background of the characters in the novel. From Harper's glamorous role in the media as a presenter on her own radio show, *Afternoons with Harper*, Johns characters do not have conventional occupations! This also extends to Jasper and eventually Claire's business, a hot air ballooning. This segment of the novel was as entertaining, as it was fascinating and enlightening. I welcomed the opportunity to learn about the trade of hot air ballooning, the history and to debunk some myths I had about it. However, it wasn't enough to convince me to try it one day, I'm still too scared of heights to embark on a trip in the air!

I will say due to the pleasure of the school holidays, I was able to enjoy the bulk of this novel in an afternoon! The pages of this four hundred plus page book seemed to pass by, without a glance. I was completely lost inside the fold of *The Greatest Gift* – especially when Johns delivered a whopper of twist around the half way point of the novel, which left me in pieces. After reading and sniffing my way through

this novel, when I reached the end, my heart was full. The added bonus of the moving epilogue closed this novel off in the most bittersweet way. I extend my thanks to Rachael Johns, forever my auto buy author, for delivering into my hands one of the greatest book gifts of 2017, *The Greatest Gift*.

Brenda says

Harper Drummond and her husband Samuel lived in Sydney and were both career people – when they'd first met, they had both let the other know neither of them wanted children; their busy lifestyles and love for each other was enough. Samuel was an upcoming lawyer looking at becoming a partner in the business, while Harper was a highly successful radio host, interviewing interesting people on a daily basis.

But it was when Harper interviewed a young couple who had been unable to have children, along with another woman who was invested in their future, that Harper's thoughts changed. She wondered if there wasn't something more she could do with her life; something to help others who weren't as fortunate.

When Claire and Jasper met, the attraction was immediate. But Claire fought it, rebuffing Jasper – her inability to have children due to a childhood illness had made her determined never to marry. Jasper's love for Claire convinced her that nothing was impossible though, so she joined him in the Hunter Valley and began working in the hot air balloon business which had been a part of Jasper's family for decades.

The discussion about children brought up egg donation – could they do that? Would they qualify? They were excited; ecstatic in fact. It would be the greatest gift from someone – to give them the ability to have a child. But was there anyone out there who would be suitable?

The Greatest Gift by Aussie author Rachael Johns packs an emotional punch which is up there with the very best. A beautiful, inspirational, heartbreaking and moving story, *The Greatest Gift* deals with motherhood in all its forms and what some will do to become a mother. I loved the characters, especially Claire, and Harper's sister Willow. Wendy and Joanne were special ladies as well. All in all, *The Greatest Gift* is a book that can't be bettered in my opinion. I have no hesitation in recommending it highly, and have firmly lodged this author up with my favourites.

With thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for my digital ARC to read and review. (And also to the publisher for granting my wish on NetGalley – I was thrilled!)

Julie Garner says

I received an advanced reading copy of this book.

I have never read a Rachael Johns novel before. I always thought she was rural romance and it didn't really interest me. I learnt a lot from this book. Firstly, never assume anything about any author. Secondly, this lady can write!

There was a lot going on in *The Greatest Gift*. First and foremost is the issue of egg donation - not the ones that your chickens lay, but the ones that will allow one woman to become a mother. I won't go in to details on the storyline here as you really must read the book. I think it will touch close to home for a lot of women and they will feel their attention pulled in many different directions.

There are a number of emotions running rampant throughout this book. They suck you in and pull you along.

There is definately sadness within these pages but there is also a lot of love and happiness. I am not sure about anyone else but for a little while there I was really starting to dislike Harper in a big, big way. I understood the emotions and the feelings behind her choices but it was more the way she went about it all that rubbed me up the wrong way. It wasn't until I got to the epilogue that I had an 'A-Ha' moment and then I got it. I guess, not being a mother I wasn't fully understanding.

I believe that a book that has you feel such strong emotions towards a character, or a situation is a well crafted piece of work. I am very glad that I gave in and read Rachael's book. It has made me think about life in many different ways. Thumbs up for the writing style, but most of all, for the courageous story she has chosen to share. Thank you.

Krystal says

So chick-lit is really not my genre of choice, but this heartwarming novel blew me away!

The novel is a detailed journey, so begins with the romance between Claire and Jasper while alternating between Harper's first inclination to donate eggs in the present. It's a clever opening that creates immediate investment in the main characters and even though you know what's coming, it's enjoyable to read.

Claire and Jasper are an adorable couple, and I became rather attached to them and their heartbreaking journey. Harper was a strong independent woman who probably mentioned that fact one too many times but was well-balanced by her blossoming maternal instinct. Samuel was a jerk, but then he was nice, but then he was a jerk ... honestly, the guy gave me whiplash with his mood swings.

I can't go into too much detail without spoilers so let me just say this is so much bigger than the ethics of 'test tube' babies. This story really tugged at my cold, crime-fiction-loving heart and kept me hooked the entire time. I was genuinely surprised by how much this book messed with my emotions!

A captivating, thoughtful story of an incredibly real journey. Highly recommend.

Mandy White says

Oh my goodness.. have the tissues ready for this one. What an emotional book! So many tears for the heartbreak in this story. My first Rachael Johns book although I had heard of her and seen her books around. Definately will be picking up more. This book was so beautiful and sad and happy.. a rollercoaster of emotions. I read this in one day. Thank you to Netgalley and HQ Fiction for a copy of this book to read and review.

Sarah says

Unfortunately, this was a roller coaster of emotions for all the wrong reasons for me. The first chapters were so lovey-dovey I wanted to set the book aside entirely. Then things got better and I actually started enjoying the story and connecting with the characters. Then things got weird and all emotional ties I'd had were severed quite abruptly and I could never reestablish them.

Based on other reviews it's clear that a lot of people love this book, and I honestly thought I'd be in the same camp. But in the end I was left feeling dissatisfied so it seems *The Greatest Gift* just isn't for me.

Theresa Smith Writes says

The Greatest Gift is a truly remarkable story, a rare example of a perfectly balanced novel. The deepest of sorrows meets joyous hope in equal measure within its pages and consider yourself warned when I say: pack some tissues. Deeply moving, in so many ways, *The Greatest Gift* will have you shedding a tear even if you think you aren't a person who normally cries while reading a book. And it's not that this is a sad, depressing read; quite the opposite. There is so much hope and beauty, but the very 'real' aspect of this story is what will have you reaching for the tissues. This is life in words and Rachael Johns is fast proving herself to be a master when it comes to this style of storytelling.

What I loved so much about *The Greatest Gift* was the way Rachael took a single idea and then built an entire world from it. She gives her characters interesting careers, so in addition to the story itself wrapping you up, you find yourself fascinated by what the characters do for a living. Hot air ballooning! Absolutely incredible. I loved reading about all of the aspects associated with the hot air ballooning business – not to forget the history as well! - and while this has always been an activity I've wanted to do, reading about it in this novel has made me want to bump it to the top of my bucket list. And while I learnt a lot about ballooning from this story, in no way did Rachael ever 'fact dump'. Everything she wanted us to know was woven so well into the narrative that you hardly even noticed that you were getting a run down on the industry. Likewise, with Harper's radio show; another interesting career, where we got to dip our toe into something fascinating without it overshadowing the main event.

Another area that Rachael excels at within this novel is how she doesn't shy away from including lots of characters. There was a whole host of wonderful – and not so wonderful, but still very realistic – characters within *The Greatest Gift*, their various supporting roles elevating this novel and securing it as a truly entertaining and enjoyable read. There was also a distinctly Australian feel to the story that I appreciated immensely; kind of a *Wrong Girl* meets *Offspring* blending with Monica McInerney. Just delightful! I found the 400 pages slipping away effortlessly as I read all day long (the joys of being on holiday) and deep into the night.

What really secured this novel as a firm favourite for me though, was the way in which it examined the many different faces of motherhood. Told with sensitivity and intelligence, Rachael peers beyond the veil of what it means to be a mother, deconstructs that ideal, and builds it back up again with a contemporary view. Science has done much to enhance women's chances at being able to conceive and bear children when they would have otherwise not been able to. I found Claire's situation within this story quite moving but as you read on you see that there is so much more to this novel than one woman giving a gift to another. Rachael explores mothers and the influences they have on our lives, both good and bad, and I found myself personally relating to so many things within this story; it was deeply touching and entirely relevant within the context of society today.

The end of this novel contains a poignant surprise that I absolutely adored. Serendipity in action. I highly recommend *The Greatest Gift* as the perfect present for the reader in your life this Christmas. Just make sure to put it onto your own wish list so you also get a copy! Don't be fooled by the pretty pink cover with those cute daisies; *The Greatest Gift* will ring you dry as well as fill your heart. It's a truly beautiful novel and I

congratulate Rachael Johns on her achievement and thank her dearly for giving us The Greatest Gift.

Thanks is extended to Harlequin Enterprises for providing me with a copy of The Greatest Gift for review.

The Greatest Gift is book 60 in my 2017 Australian Women Writers Challenge.

Shirley Wine says

A wonderful story with many tissue moments The Greatest Gift explores a sensitive issue with depth and compassion. There are so many twists and turns in this plot to keep me reading until the wee small hours.

Bianca says

This was the third novel by Rachael Johns that I read and it's probably my favourite.

The *greatest gift* refers to the generosity of a woman who donates some of her eggs to another woman/couple so they can have a child.

Harper Drummond is a career woman, who doesn't want children, but feels compelled to do something selfless, so she decides to donate her eggs. The couple she chooses are the balloonists, Claire and Jasper, who are very much in love but can't procreate because Claire's childhood leukaemia treatment that left her infertile.

I loved how Johns juxtapositioned the reality of infertility, the medical procedures involved in egg harvesting and embryo implantation, and the legal and emotional investment from both parties. Egg donation is an utterly selfless gesture, but as you can guess, there are issues that can complicate life, that's why counselling is demanded before proceeding ahead.

When tragedy strikes, the previously agreed upon stipulations change, as the worlds of both the egg donor and the receiving couple change in unmitigating ways. Nature vs nurture comes into play. Biology's pull can be very powerful.

I'll leave it at that, as I don't want to give away too much of the plot.

The *Greatest Gift* was emotionally charged and very touching. Be warned – you'll need tissues. In the end, this is a story about love, generosity and the different types of families.

I've received this book via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review. Many thanks to Harlequin Australia for the opportunity to read and review this advanced copy.

This book will also count towards my Aussie Author Challenge on <http://bookloverbookreviews.com/readi...>

Suzanne says

2.5 stars I think, rounded up. Very simplistic in style, a little cliched. I know I'm in the minority here.

Average audio narration probably didn't help me feel attached to the story unfortunately.

This was a very topical read, I am a mother, I have seen friends with fertility struggles, but have not faced them myself. Reading this book has enabled me to understand what this could be like. *Rachael Johns* conveyed her empathy on this subject.

I enjoyed *Jilted* more than this one, possibly given the less serious story line. I felt parts of this story to have fallen into place a little conveniently, but did appreciate the feel good parts as well.

I own many more books written by this author, and look forward to getting to them. Having met book friends just recently who loved this book, I am reminded how boring it would be if we all loved the same things - most of them loved this book.

The Hunter Valley settings and the interesting industry of hot air ballooning were a nice part of this read, I always enjoy local settings.

Claire says

What an incredible story, the amount of emotions I went through reading this, joy, happiness, disbelief, grief and so much more. To donate an egg to someone so they can have the chance of being a parent, it is something that hits close to home and it is such a beautiful thing, that someone can do that for someone else. The characters are real and I was completely invested in them throughout this story, though there was one I completely disliked. So many different relationships and personalities that made this story come to life. The hot air ballooning was a great setting and I can't wait to try it for myself, to feel the peace and joy of being up in the sky. A fabulous read once again

My thanks to Harlequin Australia and Netgalley for a copy for an honest review.

Sharon says

There's not enough words to describe this book, but some of the words that come to mind when I think about this book are heartbreaking, touching, beautiful, amazing, moving and emotional.

Aussie author Rachael Johns has done a remarkable job in writing this book. Anytime I read a book on the issue of infertility, I immediately know the book will have my attention from the start and *The Greatest Gift* certainly had my attention not only from the start, but all the way to the very last page. The emotional roller coaster that a couple endure through this process is like no other and whilst reading this book you will feel like you're on a roller coaster with the characters. A brilliant read which I have no hesitation in HIGHLY recommending. WARNING: Keep a box of tissues close by.

Sally906 says

This is one of my top reads this year - Rachael Johns is an Australia author who writes 5-star romances as well more meaty Contemporary Fiction – this is meaty, very meaty – it is to do with infertility and egg

donation and the story plunged me to the depths of despair forcing me to reach for tissues and put it down and take a break to calm down. After despair, though, comes hope. And gradually the reader is brought back to normal emotions again - and, like the characters, learn to laugh again.

Very well researched, the depth of 'realness' of the characters is outstanding, as was my involvement in the story - I was totally absorbed. Rachael also managed to avoid a clichéd resolution and came up with an innovative way to close the story. Every time I read one of her books I think this is the best ever she can't top this – and then she does!!!

Kathryn says

In her latest book *The Greatest Gift* Rachael Johns explores the issues of wanting children but being infertile and the amazing role those who make egg donations take on, to help those who have a strong desire to be a parent. This was actually a new idea to me, not sure why I hadn't heard of it before but I hadn't and so this book was a marvellous way for me to gain insight into it.

Harper is a woman who doesn't want children and neither does her husband Samuel. However Harper does want to contribute and find deeper meaning in her life so she decides to explore the possibility of donating some of her eggs. Thereby creating the greatest gift.

Claire is infertile due to a childhood illness and so when she wants children one possibility is to look for an egg donor. In Australia this is unpaid and donors willingly make the gift. How things follow up in terms of whether the egg donor has any further communication with the new parents was another interesting aspect.

Of course this is a story that does not just go from A to B and new baby and every one goes home happy. Rachael Johns throws in a few curly twists and turns that made for some heart in the mouth reading.

I liked the development of the characters, especially that of Harper - her journey was in the end the one that grabbed me. Jasper - husband of Claire, was another character whose reactions and feelings seemed totally believable. How they change and take up the challenges of the journey they are on made for some very good reading.
