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The Book Of Bright Ideas: A Novel



Synopsis

BONUS: This edition contains an excerpt from Sandra Kring's *A Life of Bright Ideas*. Wisconsin, 1961. Evelyn "Button" Peters is nine the summer Winnalee and her fiery-spirited older sister, Freeda, blow into her small town "and from the moment she sees them, Button knows this will be a summer unlike any other. Much to her mother's dismay, Button is fascinated by the Malone sisters, especially Winnalee, a feisty scrap of a thing who carries around a shiny silver urn containing her mother's ashes and a tome she calls "The Book of Bright Ideas." It is here, Winnalee tells Button, that she records everything she learns: her answers to the mysteries of life. But sometimes those mysteries conceal a truth better left buried. And when a devastating secret is suddenly revealed, dividing loyalties and uprooting lives, no one "from Winnalee and her sister to Button and her family" will ever be the same.

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Customer Reviews

I realize it's an overused phrase, "I couldn't put it down," however, if any book deserves to be described in this manner, it's this charming and beautifully-written story called "The Book of Bright

Idea." I picked it up because of the cover art, a little blond girl with a tutu and a tiara, and I liked the idea of reading about friendship. And that's exactly what this story is about. It's about a friendship not only between the nine-year-old narrator, "Button," and a little girl named Winnalee, but also between the women in their lives, the exotic and wild Freeda, the conservative and self-loathing Jewel, and the lovable and joyful Aunt Verdella. I found the voice of the narrator captivating and consistent, so pure in spirit--dripping with innocence--that I was completely engrossed in her story of the summer Freeda and Winnalee showed up in their small Wisconsin town. The characters and the relationships are complicated and intriguing. Winnalee, a gypsy of a girl obsessed with fairies, dress-up clothes, and the urn holding the ashes of her "Ma," carries around a display book of blank pages with the title "Great Expectations," in which she records bright ideas as they come to her. She numbers them and has a goal to reach 100 bright ideas, believing this magical number will allow her to know all the secrets of life. When she moves into Button's dead grandmother's house, Winnalee becomes Button's best friend and allows Button to add ideas to the book as they come to her. The ideas are never random, but always based on a personal experience and refreshingly down to earth and amusing. For example, "Bright Idea #90: After you play beauty shop, your husband might say you look like a beauty queen, or he might just ask you where the Phillips screwdriver is.

I found, "The Book of Bright Ideas" after reading "Thank You for all Things." In the Book of Bright Ideas, we get to see the world of Button (Evelyn) Peters through the perspective of an eight-year-old girl. I am very captivated by books about people who are damaged and fragmented and the lengths they willing to endure to either change or not change. We meet Button and her family who is dysfunctional at best. One-summer day two sisters come to town, Freeda and Winnalee. It is a summer of awakenings, secrets kept and secrets exposed. Lives are not only shaken up but also shaken to the foundations. Truth is a mirror that shows our deepest hopes and secrets. Everyone get to look at that mirror and we get to see those truths through the eyes of a child. We meet damaged people and learn how they became that way. We see people evolve, grow, and change. We see people encounter truth and learn to see and speak their own truths. I have read books that play to heartstrings that make us reach for a tissue but this book does it in an honest way because it is so real and bare bones honest. Some reviews object to cursing but this book is about real life. In real life people do cuss. Characters in this book face their demons and I think that is what makes this book so special. Many people get right to the very edge and face their demons and are so overcome with terror they run; never gathering the strength to push past that and actually see what happens. That is not the case in this book. Perhaps it is not by everyone's choice, but

truths are told and no one is ever the same. The characters are very real. I did not find the book predictable or trite either. I have loved books all my life.

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