



As It Is In Heaven

Niall Williams

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Set in the west of Ireland and Venice, this book features a shy and unconfident schoolteacher and his lovelorn and depressed father whose only desire is to die and join his wife and daughter in heaven.

As It Is In Heaven Details

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Author : Niall Williams

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Norah says

This seemed a sad and slow-moving book at first, but I soon began to enjoy the rich language of Niall Williams. A story full of ridiculous happenstance and coincidence, sad, slow-moving, but so satisfying, not as a happy-ever-after ending, but something better.

Juliet Wilson says

A beautiful love story between a withdrawn Irish teacher and a passionate Italian violinist, who carries the scent of lilies with her. But the real wonder of the book is in the details – the father and son communicating silently through their chess games, the tailor who can read a man's health through the fit of his clothes, the doctors who believe they are fakes because they cannot heal the soul, the magic realism in the way the music transports everyone who hears it. Even the minor characters are memorable. Ten stars and a box of hankies.

Ann Marie says

Brought me right back to Kenmare. Dreamy and lovely.

Dawn says

This is my 5th books of Niall Williams. His first four had to do with the "Making a go of it" on the west coast of Ireland. This is his first work of fiction that I have read. He is an extraordinary wordsmith; his words have a lightness that almost float off the page to evoke a feeling of atmosphere - the sounds and smells and the look of a place are all captured through the essence of light. The story itself is a beautifully and artfully told tale of love - the love of a man for his dead wife; the love of a father for his son; the love of a man for a woman. Somehow, this story is told through nuances that waft like the mist and catch the air and shoot like raw energy. It's an interesting and captivating thing that Mr. Williams does. What it means for the reader is that you need to be patient. You need to allow the story to seep in to your skin too, which it will if you give it a chance.

Having read Mr. Williams' autobiographical accounts, I recognized some of themes that he and his wife, Christine Breen, struggled with and there was a character that made me think of one of the Williams' neighbors who was a key player in the autobiographies. He draws heavily on the landscape of Clare and Kerry so that it becomes a character in the book that does as much of the story telling as the human interplay, and helps to ground the story too. Finally, my copy of this book is heavily marked. It's quote worthy, especially on his thoughts of the complicated manner in which love finds a way to heal all sorts of wounded relationships and people and is often imbued with a heavy dose of what can only be described as magic. And we all know that magic has a star role in matters of love! It's a wonderful book and has made me feel happy!

Crystal says

Some of my favorite parts/lines...

"When somethin of great size moves into the heart it dislodges all else, in just the same way that the forward movemen of the queen reshapes the (chess) board."

"But neither did he hear the voice that whispers insistently beneath the surface of all our happiness, that urges us to gather each moment like a small stone and store it in the deep pockets of your soul, that knows what lies ahead and offers only the wisdom of living fully and cherishing like the briefest dream this season of loving, for these are the instants of passion which will later become those diamonds of memory that will cry out: Here, there, look, in these moments I lived and knew a boundless joy, I loved."

"He had already realized without shock that when you give yourself completely to someone else you see the world through their eyes, and so easily imagined her own delight..."

"... the puzzle of love was that the pieces did not seem to fit, but lay in the palm of your hand like some insoluble cipher until at last you let them go and saw them fall, gradually, into place."

"... we cannot remake the past nor build a new life on the ruins of the old."

"It was the kind of healing that is made of....short naps and long dreams, and of the deeply comfortable silences that grow between a man and a woman who come to know each other's breath and do not need many words."

" Stephen Griffen knew something of the puzzles of the world and understood that all love did not perish and could survive beyond pain and hardship and loneliness; and in that innocent vision with which he was gifted that morning he saw that the world fitted together, each piece in its proper place, like the pieces on a chessboard, and that though the patterns that emerged were complex and difficult and grew more so all the time, there was a design nonetheless, for though we live in the impotency of our dreams to make better the world, the earth and its stars spin through the heavens at the rate of our loving and is made meaningful only in the way in which we give ourselves to each other."

Jeffrey Keeten says

"When he went to university and began to study history, it was the now familiar presence of the disappeared that attracted him. He sat in the glass-fronted room of the library and lost himself with the ghosts of the previous three hundred years. He kept his head down and his eyes moving on the pages, but his mind took flight, and soon even his body was elsewhere, a fact noticed only by old Murtagh, the ancient librarian assistant, who himself had long ago vanished into the books of Thomas Hardy."

Whenever life has become too heavy, too tragic, I've always been able to save myself in books. I can for hours at a time transport myself to another time, another place, meet new friends, or unlike real life, battle defeatable villains. Stephen has the best of reasons for needing to escape into the pages of books. He has lost love and needs love, but doesn't have the first idea about how to find it. Sometimes, when we are most helpless, fate lends a hand.

As I was reading this book, I kept thinking about the song by Louis XIV called *Finding Out True Love is Blind*, which is a saucy little song about lust and love. The songwriter talks about all the unusually pretty girls he wants to make it with.

Ah chocolate girl, well you're looking like something I want
Ah and your little Asian friend well, well she can come if she wants
I want all the self conscious girls who try to hide who they are with makeup
You know it's the girl with a frown with the tight pants I really want to shake up
Hey, carrot juice, I wanna squeeze you away until you bleed
(finding out true love is blind)
And your vanilla friend, well she looks like something I need
(finding out true love is blind)
I want miss little smart girl with your glasses and all your books
(finding out true love is blind)
And I want the stupid girl who gives me all those dirty looks

This song would have made absolutely no sense to Stephen Griffin because the songwriter doesn't say anything about **the girl playing the violin in the green velvet dress**. It is love at first sight or more correctly love at the first stroke of her bow. The music has slipped a blindfold over his eyes and left him trembling with the possibilities of love.

After the death of his mother and sister in a car accident, both Stephen and his father are left shattered and hollowed out. They are sad, soul sad. Gloom hangs like black smoke over everything they do, over everything they feel, strangling hope and turning joy to dust. The father is willing himself to get cancer, and Stephen is merely going through the motions of living.

"There in the sunlight she looked at the pale man with the white face and thin black hair. He was transparent. There was about him such a pitiful shrinking from life..." as if he were expecting the final hammer blow to fall at any moment. By the fickleness of fate or maybe for this moment chaos had moved on to other victims, Stephen attends a concert, and for the first time hears the music of Gabriella Castoldi. She is lost as well, an Italian, who discovered her poet boyfriend didn't love her anymore and allowed herself to be abandoned in Ireland.

I have always been cynical about love at first sight. I usually refer to it as lust at first sight because it can only be based on how physically attractive we find this other person. Love, to me, always has to be built on more solid foundations than just an attraction to symmetrical features or an hourglass figure or broad shoulders. Niall Williams, in the land of fairies and sprites and leprechauns, almost convinces me that love at first sight is more like a cosmic meeting of old souls that recognize each other over and over again. Stephen morphs into Stephano and tries to become everything Gabriella needs. He is so needy and clingy that his attentiveness threatens to smother the fragile flame of early love. She is his life raft in the middle of an ocean of despair.

When we fall in love, it is always interesting how clearly we see the rest of our life. When Stephano walks into the job he despises, it is with renewed purpose, bolstered by the gauze of love that has wound tendrils of steely determination into his heart and soul.

"I care about the history and the few who want to learn it. But what I have discovered is this: it's not my life. It's someone else's life that I'm living, that I just fell into, the way people take wrong turns and don't know it and just keep going because it's too hard and frightening not to, and then they find themselves years later in some place they never wanted to be, with the regrets eating them up like cancers."

I am a product of being trapped by my own successes. I never wanted to be a circulation manager, and even when I took the job, I intended to only do it for five years at the most and then move on to something more interesting. I turned out to be pretty good at figuring out the problems inherent with the job and expanded the role. The company needed me and appreciated my efforts. I started making more money. At one point, I even felt confident in demanding more money, and the next thing I knew I was...stuck. I then doubled down and took advantage of an opportunity to become one of the owners of the company. I thought I'd be happier, but the thing of it is, I was never supposed to be a circulation manager. I'm living someone else's life, and I'm sure many of the people who will end up reading this review will also be living a life they were never supposed to.

Reading books is a way to escape the compromised life I've allowed myself to be trapped in. Writing reviews is a way for me to slip off the harness, to frolic with words, and even to convince myself for a while that I'm a real writer.

Someday, maybe I, like Stephen can have the courage to break away and reach out for the ghost of myself that has proven so elusive.

This is why we read fiction, isn't it?

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

Richard Marshall says

A story of love and loss and the redeeming power of faith. The characters are well drawn and their motivations believable albeit dogged by fate.

Julie Christine says

Just what the doctor ordered: a beautiful, mystical story of love, loss, redemption and rebirth- complete with the dreamy atmospheres of Venice and the West of Ireland. And much to my heart's relief- a happy ending. Or rather, a beginning filled with hope and joy.

I started this last week and stopped because the opening pages were too filled with grief and loss- more than I could stand at the present moment.

But I picked it up again last night, after abandoning another Irish-set horror-mystery book that left me feeling really icky.

It was like sinking into the soft embrace of a favorite arm chair set in the middle of a green meadow: soothing, invigorating, life-affirming, charming, safe. Williams writes prose like poetry with such affection for and joy in his characters and his settings.

Knowing the author, there is no guarantee of a happy ending, but there is certain to be a fair amount of mysticism and legend that is so quintessentially Irish. And love- Williams is a master of the love story.

Jessa says

Everytime I picked up this book and tried to read it i felt like I was torturing myself. After about 75 pages I skimmed through the rest of the book and got through it in a few hours and still didn't miss anything. Didn't really like the characters and the story was so slow and boring.

Cynthia Heinrichs says

A gorgeous read. I'm not one for love stories, and sometimes this jaded heart finds Williams' prose overblown and I want to roll my eyes the way I might when I find someone telling a story with high drama, more for their own pleasure in hearing themselves talk than for the entertainment of their hearer, but I keep going (because I can't help myself, his words are so delicious) and then I find myself reading his prose aloud and forgiving how openly he speaks of love and I'm turning over the corners of pages so I can go back and reread them later(I never do this!) because he has described some feelings so perfectly, just as I've felt them, and I am in awe and have to acknowledge that he's writing about something that is outside my comfort zone. Love, despair dashed by hope, all that beautiful jazz.

And Ireland. In this book he takes us to the west of Ireland and, there again, he speaks true. It's a magical place, not just physically, but in the people.

This is my second Niall Williams book. I'm ready for a third.

Kinosfronimos says

I purchased the book as I thought it was the novel of the movie by the same name, which I had seen upon its release in 2004 and remembered as brilliant. But when I found the novel to be set in Ireland, I knew something was up. The novel is not the same as the movie (which was set in Sweden) - but I'm glad I picked it up anyways.

The story opens with a father and son who have shut themselves off from life after their wife/mother and daughter/sister were killed in a car crash years back. They see each other, go through the motions of work - but find no joy or lust for life. The writing style is fairly simple, but with wonderful metaphors scattered like sparkling gems. Chapters are fairly short, and easy to keep slipping into the next. The dreariness of the climate and landscape, and their emotional state is often and beautifully paralleled. Some of the other recurring characters are also gleefully idiosyncratic, like the greengrocer who perceives people's ills and subtly prescribes them appropriate fruit which she knows will assuage them, or the domineering school principal, or the doctor who no longer has faith in his practice. And yet there comes an opportunity for an opening in the son's life when he meets an Italian violin player. A form of redemption of their lives that the father too partakes of.

It is essentially a love story, but well crafted, though at times verging on the melodramatic/maudlin. Nevertheless there is a faith in love that hits a poignant note. If you can suspend your cynicism, which the characters too have to do, it really is heart warming, well written and enjoyable, though I'm definitely reading something quite different next.

Ilze says

When you first start reading this book, it almost frustrates in the sense that the narrative is slowed down tremendously by the poetic language. Williams is able to create mood and beauty with his words like none I've read in English before. Once you've gotten used to this, the story starts to move and you are moved by it. There are moments when you want to cry, and moments when a smile is possible, and often, you see yourself in that narrative: Experiencing love and death and God. The three puzzles Williams begins the book with and somehow ends it by leaving you satisfied that the questions are answered, even if they remain mysterious. It's an unusual narrative* and for this very reason makes it possible for any ready to identify with it, because you're able to see the chess pieces move across the board of life and make them your own.

*Unusual in the sense that someone as responsible as Stephen Griffen could walk out on a job just because he is in love, or in the sense that someone as in love as Gabriella Custoldi could walk out on Stephen, and who of us hasn't dreamed of giving money away the way Phillip Griffen does? We have, in any event, experienced loss, even if it isn't at the level he did, or grieved over it. The book has left me with the feeling that absolutely nothing is impossible as long as you can set your mind to it and have faith. God lives!

TheGirlBytheSeaofCortez says

Note: I posted this same review on Amazon.com right after reading the book.

As It Is In Heaven is my favorite Niall Williams book. Part of the reason it is my favorite is the fact that it takes place in Ireland and in Venice...two of my favorite places in the world. And Ireland and Venice are perfect locales for this story with its distinctly fairy tale quality. There is magic in "As It Is In Heaven" and it is definitely Irish magic.

The characters in this book are all emotionally and spiritually damaged, but then who isn't? Still, Philip, Stephen and Gabriella seem to be a little more damaged and vulnerable to pain than are most and they really

come to life in this book. Williams does a superb job of baring their souls and letting us share in their emotions.

Philip Griffin is a man who blames himself for the death of his wife and young daughter many years ago (although he is blameless). Stephen, his son, now thirty-two, was raised and loved by his father, but it is clear that the loss of his mother has affected him deeply. He is a man who knows "the fine skills of walking in empty rooms and being aware of the ghosts." Although the story isn't predictable, its theme is clear: this is a story about the redemptive power of love, the power of love to heal, to make whole.

Stephen feels his life begin to heal when he meets the beautiful Venetian violinist, Gabriella Castoldi. Gabriella is a woman who is fighting ghosts of her own. An "expectancy of grief" hovers over her at all times; it is so powerful it even affects those with whom she interacts.

This is a story that could so easily have fallen into the very maudlin. And sometimes Williams does give in to the temptation to write a little over-the-top. Love doesn't heal all wounds; it's no magic panacea of beauty and poetry and it can sometimes cause more problems than it solves. This is something Williams seems to want to forget.

Williams rescues (and balances) his story, however, with insight into the human soul that is housebreakingly accurate, achingly perceptive and beautifully wise. And, sometimes these insights come from unexpected sources, making them all the more believable and welcome.

The fey, fairy tale quality of this book will no doubt draw some readers in while causing others to discard it as "too romantic." I think I fall somewhere in between. Love doesn't solve all problems, love can't endure against all odds, yet love is the force that drives the universe and gives meaning to our lives. I found I was able to forgive Williams' ventures into the overly-lyrical and enjoy *"As It Is In Heaven"* for the beautiful love story it is.

Williams' prose is very lyrical, very poetic and very romantic, but this book is still exceptionally well-written. And sometimes, a very romantic story is just what I'm looking for. Although I don't believe love can conquer all, I certainly believe in its healing and redemptive powers.

I don't think there's an author alive who writes of the pain and beauty of love with quite the magic of Niall Williams. If you're in the mood for an old-fashioned love story, one that will make you laugh and cry and sigh, then you really can't do better than *As It Is In Heaven*. Leave reality behind when you enter this magic world; just savor the book and let it become a part of you.

Dhanaraj Rajan says

I wavered between 3 and 4 stars and at the end decided on 3 stars.

The reason why I wanted 4 stars:

The novel is well written, I mean the prose is apt to the plot. It is a love story filled with tinges of tragedy and simple beliefs in hope. The prose was simply lovely when it was dealing with the love story and was subtly emotional as it was tracing the lines of tragedy and was very soothing when it was about the simple hopes that the life would turn out well. The language carried the emotions of the story. This is a hard feat to achieve and Niall Williams has done it.

The reason for the 3 stars:

The plot is very simple. It is about a love story between an Irish teacher and the Italian violinist. It has also a sub plot - the relationship between the dying father and his son, the Irish teacher who is finding love for the first time in his life. The plot can be very simple and that can still make the novel very different. And that does not happen here. It starts as a simple love story and ends as a stereotypical simple love story. The story too moves at times very slow owing to the descriptions of the mood and scene. In fact the realization that some of such descriptions already appeared earlier in the novel makes the novel and the progress of the plot all the more slow.

A simple love story written in an angelic prose. If you are a person who believes in the stereotype -according to which a boy meets a girl and eventually they both fall in love, but then owing to some past or other reasons they find themselves not fit to be together and, at the end the love triumphs and they get united - then this is the story for you.

Ginger Bensman says

As It Is In Heaven is a beautiful mystical novel brimming with ravishing prose about a widowed and dying father's love and hopes for his son. Stephen, his quiet unassuming school teacher son's world is transformed by a chance encounter and his subsequent pursuit of a lovely Italian violinist. (Or, perhaps there is no such thing as chance, only kismet.) The book is a tour de force that captures the landscapes of Ireland and Venice—and the human heart. I fell in love with William's characters and his seamless use of magical realism, but most of all his use of language. This book goes right to the top of my list of favorite novels—sometimes I cried just because the prose is so exquisite.

Claudia Sesto says

Un uomo, una donna, l'Irlanda e la musica un mix che crea l'amore!

Un uomo, vede una donna che suona un violino e scoppia l'amore....

L'autore di questo libro ci conduce in un viaggio nelle terre d'Irlanda, in quei bellissimi paesaggi che la caratterizzano, ci insegna l'importanza dei due sensi: l'olfatto e il gusto, ci fa vivere la vita in tutte le sue sfaccettature: la paura, il dolore, la gioia, l'amore, l'invidia, la solitudine, le maldicenze e ci fa apprezzare come contorno alle vicende umane "la musica" in particolare quella classica.

Un padre ed un figlio che vivono in un mondo fatto di silenzio, che li avvolge dopo la perdita in un incidente di moglie/madre e figlia/sorella e si nascondono dietro le loro interminabili partite a scacchi, così lontani eppure così vicini, accumunati da un dolore che li avvolge e da un grande affetto e rispetto.

Ma l'amore cambierà tutti: il padre, il figlio e la donna tutti affronteranno le loro paure, i loro dolori fino a raggiungere la pace con se stessi ed ad avere rapporti d'amore profondi e sinceri.

Bellissima la figura di Nelly Grant la fruttivendola!

Elyse says

I made a terrific spontaneous purchase when I downloaded
....."As It Is In Heaven", by Niall Williams. It was HEAVENLY!!!!!!!

THANK YOU*Jeffrey*! It was the Perfect Book at the perfect time!!!!!!

I was 'still' bathing in the experience of "The Heart's Invisible Furies", by John Boyle.

I couldn't for the life of me settle down with the next book.

I read the beginnings of around 10 books in my house.....not even checking my kindle downloads. None of them were what I was looking for.

MY HUNGER for the RIGHT BOOK felt crucial.

I had read Jeffrey's review yesterday of "As It Is In Heaven", loved it, teased him like I do, but a light didn't go off until very early this morning before I was out of bed-- that "oh my God, I know what to read next". I felt a strong pull to this book. It felt urgent! I still wanted to be in Ireland. I became even more excited at the thought of this novel 'mixing' the Irish and Italian! Dublin and Venice. I was salivating!!!! It's amazing how fast and easy it is to spend \$9.99 before brushing your teeth.

The story pulls you in instantly. The writing is gorgeous- the story keeps spinning, and we are hanging onto every word. Such a lovely writer Niall Williams is!!!!

Don't laugh.... but 'this American', got excited just the mention of "Grafton Street".... not far from 'College Green' where crowds gathered around Barack Obama in 2011.

I had read so much about Grafton Street...(and about),....in Dublin....from John Boyne's 'Furies', I felt like I was 'home'!

and.....'home' is FANTASTIC!!!!

This is my first book by Niall Williams.... and boy, he's a natural storyteller!!! I can't believe this book isn't more popular! It's page turning engaging, timeless. I'm 'sure' all my friends would like it!!!!

The opening sentence is powerful:

"There are only three great puzzles in the world, the puzzle of love, the puzzle of death, and between each of these and part of both of them, the puzzle of God".

"Philip Griffin lost his wife, Anne, and his 10 year old daughter, Mary, in a car accident years ago.

Twenty years later, his remaining son , Stephen, age 32 - became a history teacher and moved away from Dublin to the west. Philip and Griffin were both alone in the world. The death from the accident of Ann and Mary dominated and shaped both these men's entire lives.

Griffin came home to visit his father one weekend a month. Philip blames himself for the accident -which was ludicrous- he was nowhere near the accident, but in Philip's mind, he stayed alive for Stephen. Philip endured suffering. He felt his pain was a type of cleansing... and that Mary and Anne were in heaven waiting for him.

Why - why - why..... do people spend their entire lives 'choosing' to suffer? I thought about this - because I think my mother suffered for years, the rest of her life, after my father died. I thought maybe it was a 'Jewish' thing?... but 'cleansing'? Well, I wasn't sure how suffering for 20 years was cleansing - as in healing?....but - I'm still thinking about it.

There was a scene I found captivating between 'father & son. Stephen came home for the weekend to see his father. Music was playing as he walked in the door - 'Puccini', 'La Boheme'.

No words were exchanged.

"The sorrowfulness of the aria was cool and delicious;

it was beyond their capability of telling, and while it played, father and son lingered in its brief and beautiful grief, each thinking of different women".

Father and son played chess that night - in the dark - with only a light from a low table lamp from the hallway. This is something they did during all their monthly visits.

But something was different about this night - Philip knew that Stephen's heart was filled with turbulence-- by the way he was moving his chess pieces. They didn't speak...but Philip could tell the depth of his son's grief, anger, and frustration by the moves he made..... in the same way other men beat a ball with a racket, releasing

demons. I was curious to meet the woman Stephen was thinking about....but during that all night chess game - actually many games - all that Stephen loss, which was unusual... I thought back to my own obsessive chess playing days.

When I was a student at Cal...(young and foolish)... I took a 'ski' day at Squaw Valley in Placer County, the day 'before' my last final of the semester. Two students and one Professor in the car... about a 4.5 hour car ride each way. I skied all day. On my last run - ("just one more"), I went flying downhill - turning a corner - I kept 'flying' and crashed. With a broken - spiral fractured of my tibia and a shattered ankle - the doctor wasn't going to release me from the hospital unless the hospital in Berkeley would take me the second my 'drivers' got back to town. I was 'not' going to stay in that strange hospital far away from friends and family with no drive home. So --in while in pain - in a crowded car we make it back to Berkeley. My car mates dropped me off at Alta Bates Hospital at midnight. The professor had to give an exam the next day. I was suppose to take one..... obviously, I never showed up for the final.

Stuck in bed in that hospital for a week.

For the next 7 months - and 3 different full length plaster casts on my right leg--

Chess became my 'drug-of-choice'. I became an-'around-the-clock' chess-junkie. I played when I didn't feel like talking - when sad, when angry, when frustrated, lonely, and afraid.

I played when I felt determined, strong, weak, stoned a few times, and often played in the dark late through the night until early morning. I never asked my house mate - and chess buddy, Jess, an engineering grad student, if he knew the depths of my moods by the 'way' I played chess. I'm guessing he did and was kind enough to stay quiet.

Back to "As It Is In Heaven".....

We meet Gabriella Castoldi, a passionate violinist. Stephen can't think of anything else but Gabriella. His life is changed forever. It's a beautiful love story --- old fashion in ways. Neither are without long term issues.... each have been hurt & broken ... but towards the end.... without being mushy... this story ends inspiring!

At every turn -I found this novel exquisite....from the landscape of Ireland --[Kerry and Clare feels like a character in itself] - and Venice, to side stories about the sins of Purgatory--the poetic language creating moods of broken hearts - grief- loss -despair -redemption- nature -music- laughter - and love.

A book I can easily recommend- with confidence- to all my friends!!!!

*Thanks again Jeffrey! Just what I was looking for!!!!

Mystica says

Stephen is a history teacher. Quiet, shy and very reserved. His father Philip is old and ill, dying in fact of cancer though he has not been to a doctor. He just knows he is. Philip lost his wife and young daughter in an accident and since then, he is just counting the days when he can be back with his wife and daughter on the other side. Philip talks to them and to all appearances in this story, they are as alive and present as they could possible be.

In this backdrop comes a violinist to this quiet backwater - a concert organized locally which Stephen attends. It is not just love at first sight, but Stephen is struck almost by lightning with his first glimpse of Gabriela. When Philip realizes that his son has fallen in love, he knows he has to live on at least till he gives his son the push he needs to follow his heart and his dreams to Venice and Gabriela.

The story more than the love of Stephen and Gabriela is one of a father's love, devotion and intuition where his child is concerned. The sacrifices that are needed on the part of a parent to see that his son reaches his goal and most importantly obtain the happiness of having a fulfilled life with a loving partner, the same happiness that Philip himself enjoyed is the main aim of Philip.

The story is sentimental and sweetly loving. Maybe a touch too much but for me the story of the self sacrificing Philip was the most emotional part of the book.

This was another download from Open Library.

Gloria says

Hi. My name is Gloria.

I'm a Niall Williams addict.

If you don't hear from me for awhile it's because I'm slinking off to go and quietly devour everything this man has ever written.

See you on the other side...

Marvin says

This gets off to a very promising start: "There are only three great puzzles in the world, the puzzle of love, the puzzle of death, and, between each of these and part of both of them, the puzzle of God. God is the greatest puzzle of all." Although the book substantively wrestles with all three issues, it's not all that profound, despite a lot of over-the-top prose. At times it reads almost like a fantasy, but one very grounded in the mundane lives & landscapes of two very likable characters--an Irish history teacher whose mother & sister died in a car crash when he was a child, and the Italian violinist he falls in love with who has led an equally tragic life of loss. Their love--and music--redeems them both. God plays no role in the redemption, despite making frequent appearances in the form of very profane superstitions. It IS a good story that's much more enjoyable to read than my comments here would suggest.
