



The Grandma Syndrome

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Ann Finlayson's self-centered world is crashed when she grudgingly agrees to do her sister a favor: watch Valerie, her eleven-year-old niece, while her sister goes out of town for a job interview.

Because Ann knows nothing about relating to children, she's infernally frustrated by the challenge of entertaining and caring for her niece.

Disaster strikes one frenzied morning as Ann attempts to navigate through rush hour traffic in downtown Chicago. Due to an ugly skirmish with Valerie on the way to school, her stress strings are already strained to the max. In this volatile state, she blows up on a mysterious old woman who holds her up in a crosswalk.

And the course of her life is changed forever.

Journey with Ann as an unlikely cast of players unwittingly join forces to support her in her new life. Bradley Newman, a kind-hearted coworker; Charlotte, a benevolent shop owner; Lisa, a parent struggling with her child's health issues; and Ann's sister, Sara, all play vital roles in introducing Ann to a side of life she's never experienced before.

"Pleasantly unexpected is how I would describe my journey through The Grandma Syndrome. I was invested early on, and my expectations were wildly exceeded."

--Abbie H.W.

"Filled with humor, tenderness and romantic mystery, this book will keep you engaged all the way to the end."

--Tina V.

"A captivating story of redemption and the healing power of love. Definitely a book worth reading."

--Carolyn W.

The Grandma Syndrome Details

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Author : Judy Greene

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From Reader Review The Grandma Syndrome for online ebook

Starz says

I received this book for free through a Goodreads giveaway. This was a good book with a great message about life. It flowed well and made for an easy read. There are God and bible references, but not in an overbearing way. It works well with the storyline and helps get the message across. The ending was a surprise and I liked the follow up with the characters. I would actually read it again and recommend for preteens to adults.

Alan says

So pleased to have won this book in a recent Goodreads First Reads giveaway.

An excellent story and believe it would appeal to most age groups. Loved the characters. I don't usually read these type of books, but am glad that I did. I rarely write what a story is about for fear of spoiling for others, but I do recommend.

Sheila says

Eleven-year-old Valerie needs a grandma to care for her while her mother is out of town at an important interview. Instead she gets her aunt, Ann Finlayson, who is singularly unprepared to look after a child. Ann shouts at strangers in the supermarket checkout, can't hold her temper when an old lady crossing the road holds up traffic, and would really prefer not to add the school run to her already busy schedule. But she can't let her sister down, so Valerie's stuck with her.

Told from varying points of view, the Grandma Syndrome is oddly captivating, growing from the trials of modern life, through the urge to preach and convert, into a powerfully fascinating parable of how we see ourselves and how others see us.

Christians in this novel play an important part. They pray, press Ann to hear their arguments, and step back to pray some more. While Ann might feel more preyed upon than prayed over at times, the Christian faith is integral to the tale, strong but honestly told, and ultimately part of the parable as well. There's mystery, romance, and maybe even magic; there's a story arc that changes the whole path of characters' lives; there's a wealth of friends who all feel very real; and there's a valuable lesson to be told, for the old and the young. The author fills it all with humor, humanity, and a happily light touch, making this book an oddly enticing and truly absorbing read.

Disclosure: I was given a copy, and I offer my honest review.

Jean says

This might be the start of a new genre-- Christian Fantasy! The plot involves an ingredient of magical realism. And definitely Christian accents.

The best part of this book is the characters; it is easy to care for them and wonder how their stories will turn out. Ann and her niece Valerie are the main characters. Ann is an anti-social workaholic, uncaring, impatient sort who is charged with taking care of Valerie over a weekend that expands to almost two weeks while Valerie's mom is off job seeking in another state. Valerie is a sweetheart of an 11-year old, outgoing, sweet, and pretty. I found it hard to understand why such a child would be so terribly bullied in school, but that's part of the story. Bradley, an office assistant where Ann works, is the kind and funny to a fault-- who wouldn't fall for him! Other characters to care about are a young boy who is ill with cancer, his mom, a drugstore employee named Charlotte, and Valerie's mom Sara.

I liked the book well enough to read about halfway in, then skim the rest of the story, as the scenes and dialog become repetitious and wordy. There is not a well-formed story arc. The book begins with Ann wondering how she'll endure taking care of a pre-teen girl she hardly knows, and Valerie is reluctant to be with her less-than-charming aunt. The main challenge, however, doesn't start until Chapter 5, when Ann is at the peak of frustration and insults an old woman in a crosswalk, who then puts a magical curse on Ann, causing her to age prematurely and rapidly.

Will Ann be able to get the curse removed? Aging is the worst disaster Ann can imagine. Meanwhile, the other characters in the story have another challenge: to influence Ann to accept God; Ann has no use for prayers and the Bible. All the other characters are firmly entrenched in Christianity. They are also praying for Ann's personality to soften. Another challenge is the age difference between Ann and Bradley as Ann continues to look more like 70 than 32.

There are some missed opportunities for stresses on Ann that could make the story a bit more exciting: Perhaps her wig could fly off when she's driving in the convertible with a handsome man who has found Ann attractive. Or she could have really lost her cell phone, rather than finding it a few pages later. Bradley could be angrier with Ann for going out with Sean from the office. The lifting (or not) of the magical aging curse could be more clever or surprising.

Ann's gradual change of heart, as she begins to remember scenes from her childhood and family life, is believable. But I did not find the solutions to other challenges very satisfying. The religious persuasions become endless and preachy. The aging difference between Ann and Bradley is glossed over. And the other resolutions are summarized in a Pollyanna-ish epilogue. All ends happily, of course, except for one minor character.

The head-hopping of points of view is distracting at times. The main p.o.v.s are of Ann and Valerie. When the reader is in one of their heads, and the thoughts of another character move in for a paragraph, it throws off the flow of the narrative. These minor characters' thoughts or motivations could be shown through their outward expressions or dialog as interpreted through Ann or Valerie.

Jane Graham says

So enjoyed this story. Very positive and makes you reflect on yourself. Reveals emotion and respect in the characters. Some humour.
