



Stray Affections

Charlene Ann Baumbich

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The beautiful snowglobe sparks long-dormant memories for Cassie, of her beloved Grandpa Wonky, the stray she rescued as a child, and the painful roots of her combative relationship with her mother, "Bad Betty" Kamrowski. Life in Wanonishaw, Minnesota is never dull, though, and Cassie keeps the recollections at bay, busy balancing her boys, her home daycare operation, and being a good friend to best pal Margret. But after a strange—flurrious, as Cassie deems it—moment happens with the remarkable snowglobe, Cassie and the people she loves are swirled into a tumultuous, yet grace-filled, and life-changing journey.

With the quirky, close-knit Midwestern small-town feel that made *Charlene Ann Baumbich's* acclaimed *Dearest Dorothy* novels so popular, *Stray Affections* invites you to experience the laughter and the healing of second chances.

Stray Affections Details

Date : Published September 15th 2009 by Waterbrook Press (first published August 26th 2009)

ISBN : 9780307444714

Author : *Charlene Ann Baumbich*

Format : Paperback 313 pages

Genre : Fiction, Christian Fiction, Romance, Inspirational, Holiday, Christmas, Religion



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From Reader Review Stray Affections for online ebook

Kelly says

In the beginning I moved slowly through Stray Affections, but by the third chapter, I was in deep! This is not to say that the book moved slowly, it was just how it began to build for me. I thoroughly enjoyed Stray Affections. Cassie seemed like wonder woman to me. I couldn't quite understand why she didn't give herself the credit that she deserved, but then I realized it is the power of the way you are raised. The words of the mouth have a strong impact on a child. Well actually they have a strong impact on an adult as well. :)

The story flowed well with me enjoying each character as I got to know them through the story. It was a mildly funny and touching story that was seriously charming. The author has a way of bringing up difficult issues but doing so with care, grace and softness. Each item was handled appropriately but truthfully which is not easy to do.

Lorraine says

The last thing that Cassandra Higgins expects out of her Sunday is to be mesmerized at a collectors' convention by a snowglobe. The beautiful snowglobe sparks long-dormant memories for Cassie, of her beloved Grandpa Wonky, the stray she rescued as a child, and the painful roots of her combative relationship with her mother, "Bad Betty" Kamrowski. But after a strange—flurrious, as Cassie deems it—moment happens with the remarkable snowglobe, Cassie and the people she loves are swirled into a tumultuous, yet grace-filled, and life-changing journey.

Contemporary Christian fiction is not my favorite genre, so I don't read much of it. But I have to say this book wowed me. With a touch of magic, a dose of humor, and a lesson in love and forgiveness, it kept me up til way past my bedtime in order to finish it. Each of the characters was unique, lovable, and filled with everyday strengths and weaknesses. My favorites were: Cassandra, Burt Burt, Ken and the boys: Chuck, Howie, Harry and Bradley. The small town of Wanonishaw, Minnesota, is a perfect setting for this delightful story. Parts of the plot will break your heart and others are so heartwarming they will bring happy tears. I especially liked how the town came to the aid of the Manfords. Overall, a wonderful read.

FAVORITE QUOTES: "In fact, I think that the loss of a sense of humor can be a warning sign that we are mentally losing it...Sometimes the best response to help ward off the life-zapping fear monster is to keep our faith, chins, and hopes up, and to laugh."

"...I also believe that sometimes we just have to let go of our losses and find a new way to live."

"Turnabout is not fair play; it's guilt producing and sinful."

Heather says

My Thoughts:

It's truly hard to decide what I like most about Stray Affections by Charlene Ann Baumbich. Her writing

style is so easy and well paced that it requires no effort to get caught up into her wonderful story.

Stray Affections is the first story in the new Snowglobe Connections series by Charlene Ann Baumbich.

The story centers on Cassandra Higgins who is doing life, but not really living it. She sacrificed her dreams a long time ago. She felt that she didn't deserve them anymore.

She's given up on her plan and has resigned herself to a life of pleasing others- or trying to. Some people are impossible to please, like her mother.

Cassandra's life begins to take a wild and crazy turn when she purchases a snowglobe at a collector's convention. The figures inside the snowglobe remind her of herself and the dogs she loved as a child. With a rotten childhood marked by her father's alcoholism and eventual suicide and her mother's unapproachable hardness, these animals had been her saving grace. Them and Grandpa Wonky. Somehow holding that snowglobe felt magical and made her remember feelings and dreams that had been buried for years.

When the figures disappear from the snowglobe Cassandra is mesmerized by the mystery of it. Her questions and obsessions about the snowglobe, combined with her erratic behavior, begin to stir the people around her to change.

Stray Affections is a beautiful story of new beginnings and second chances.

I also love the aspect of this story that reflects the different perspectives of the characters and how they perceive each other. I loved reading about Cassandra's mom "Bad Betty" who didn't mean to be bad, but simply loved in a fearful way that her daughter read as judgement.

I think it's always good to be reminded about assumptions. I really struggle with them in my own life. Stray Affections is careful to show all the angles of a character making them full and solid enough to be believable . . . even familiar.

This is a wonderful book. I loved the story and (I hope I'm not too honest here) I loved the length of the chapters. She packs a ton of plot into each little chapter. If you have four little ones running around like I do then I'm sure you'll appreciate the ease of her story too.

At the back of the book you'll find recipes and a readers guide that just enhance this book with a bit more fun.

Nora St Laurent says

"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness. Let the bones which Thou hast broken rejoice," Charlene starts her book out quoting Psalm 51:6-8 and begins to bring some of that scripture to life inside the pages of this book.

This story is nestled in the middle of a quaint town where you discover friends and their families you'll just adore. I loved how Carlene shows the funny, honest and serious side of family relationships and how they can work together. I believe it's only by the grace of God that we can bloom and grow where we are planted. It takes courage to face your fears and let God have his way in your life, and in the lives of the people you

are in relationship with.

The main character Cassandra heads out to a Collectors' Convention alone. Her best friend Margaret cancels at the last minute. Her husband Ken encourages her to go anyway. He's got the kids, she needs take a break from life's routine; go out and have fun. Little did she know how that little trip would change her life? Are we ever ready for when God intercedes on our behalf to put us on the path He would have us be on? Letting go and letting God be in control is not something any of us feel comfortable doing. Cassandra soon learns this on her trip.

Will Ken and Cassandra trust God to work all things out for His glory and their good? You'll want to read this story and join in the mystery and fun as the author weaves a tale of healing, unconditional love, and second chances. You'll want to read Charlene Ann Baumbich's Dearest Dorothy series, with quirky, close-knot Midwestern small-town feel characters you'll grow fond of just like the ones in this book. Thanks to publisher for a review copy of this book.

Disclosure of Material Connection:

I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising"

Nora St.Laurent
The Book Club Network www.bookfun.org
The Book Club Network blog www.psalm516.blogspot.com
Book Fun Magazine www.bookfunmagazine.com

Rhonda says

It was a very sweet story and anyone that reads it can learn something about love, family, and forgiveness.

Margaret says

Sometimes when an author "strays" from a beloved series it can be quite disappointing. Not so with this one. I love Baumbich's Dearest Dorothy series but when I saw this title I thought it was worth a try...and it was.

Cassandra is a young mother of 4 little boys, the oldest one 6 years old. She is busy beyond words and Baumbich really portrayed her character well. As I laughed at all the antics and shenanigans 4 little boys and a big boy husband can create, I also remembered my own parenting days when those same or similar antics and shenanigans were so not funny.

While Cassandra loves her life, she always loved animals as a child and had dreams of becoming a veterinarian, her grandfather encouraging her and going so far as to help her hide a stray rescue dog that Cassandra was determined to care for and claim as her own. Those are fond and painful memories for her because her mother, widowed with two older boys and Cassandra to care for while working in a local factory, actually took Cassandra's dreams from her. At least, that's they way it always seemed to Cassandra.

Mother and daughter are not close and are barely civil.

Cassandra's mother also had dreams of her own when she married the love of her life. She hadn't counted on her husband drifting in and out of depression and alcohol. She hadn't counted on being left alone to raise 3 children. She, too, has painful memories and regrets; but those were never spoken aloud.

When Cassandra finds an enchanting snow globe for a rather extravagant price, her memories begin to surface. The globe seems to be taking over her life and it isn't even what she thought it was once she gets it home. But don't underestimate its power.

Again, Baumbich shows her talent for creating characters so real that it is as if you are spending your days right along side of them. Her humor shines and her portrayal of small town life and the quirky small town folks just creates wonderful pictures in my head. While I do not like cold weather, I might want to make a visit to this small town in Minnesota and stop in at the butcher shop to try some of Burt Burt's special Durves with the Featured Mustard of the Week!

And, P.S. Cassandra's husband, Ken??? He is a keeper.

Krista says

Cassandra Higgins is a young mom of four boys. She still struggles with the suicide of her father when she was a young girl. Her mom, "Bad Betty" and her do not get along. Not only does she have all of this on her plate but she discovers a snow globe at her annual shopping trip at a collector's convention, that sparks her interest. Does this snow globe hold the answers to all of her problems? But how can it? It is just a snow globe isn't it? Cassandra not only finds answers she did not know she was looking for but also healing. I enjoyed this book. It has a bit of intrigue in it that is just enough to make you wanting to read just another chapter. I am not sure that I could relate personally to any of the people in the book, but the book helped me think about what might be holding me back from my dreams and desires. Take a leap of faith and go read this book today!

Christy Lockstein says

Stray Affections by Charlene Ann Baumbich is a Snowglobe Connections novel, the first in a series. Cassandra Higgins has lived her entire life with a huge hole in her heart. Told by her grandfather that she would be the best veterinarian in Minnesota, she counted on that dream to make up for the way she felt she betrayed her childhood dog, Toby. But when she couldn't pass the classes, Cassie felt as though she failed Toby and God, so she settled for a life as a day care provider and mother of four rambunctious boys. She finds an unusual snowglobe with a little girl (whose hair matches Cassie's) holding three dogs. The purchase of the globe begins a chain reaction of events that shatters Cassie's peace of mind, upsets her relationship with her mother, and will end up changing their entire community. This unusual novel will keep readers guessing. Baumbich makes even the unsympathetic characters lovable. The power of the novel is in seeing how small seeds are planted and produce fruit through Burt's gentle affection and the mysterious snowglobe. This is a thoroughly enjoyable read.

Kathy (Bermudaonion) says

Cassie Higgins has a busy life – she's married, has four young boys (all under the age of 7) and runs an in-home daycare. She and her best friend, Margret, go to The Collectors Convention together every year. Margret can't go this year, so Cassie ends up going alone. She spots a beautiful, old snowglobe that contains a young girl with three dogs. The girl resembles her as a child and one of the dogs looks like her childhood pet. The snowglobe is expensive, but she feels like she has to have it. A few days later, as she inspects the snowglobe at home, she has a "flurrious" moment that causes her to reflect on her life.

Through flashbacks, we learn that Cassie had a difficult childhood. Her father committed suicide and her mother, "Bad Betty," became bitter after years of working long hours and struggling to make ends meet while raising three children. Cassie's Grandpa Wonky was her saving grace, but then he passed away. There was a sad moment in Cassie's childhood that has caused her relationship with her mother to be strained ever since.

Stray Affections by Charlene Ann Baumbich is a story of forgiveness, grace and acceptance. It's sweet, pleasant and light, but it was a little slow for me, because I found it pretty predictable. That's not to say it's not good – the story and message are uplifting and the characters in the small town are quirky and charming. There is a spiritual undertone, but it's not preachy – it's more about grace and love.

Jennifer Defoy says

I really liked this book. As I learned about Cassandra's past I felt sorry for her. I don't think pity is the emotion this book was trying to elicit but for some reason that was all I could feel. I think some of it was because I related to a few of the things she went through. The guilt she went through with her dog Toby was touching to me because I am a dog lover. The warnings from her cautious and seemingly "cold" mother were similar to those I've gotten (not from my mother) from people in my life. So maybe pity isn't even the right emotion, maybe it was more an understanding of why she felt the way she did.

Either way this was a pretty good book. Cassandra was a very well developed character, I really connected with her. I got a good sense of Cassandra's husband Ken, her best friend Margret, and her mother Betty, but I didn't feel that they were as developed as they could have been.

I did enjoy the book. Trying to figure out the "story" behind the snow globe was intriguing. It was easy for me to just escape into this book, I didn't feel like I was there, but I was pretty engrossed with what was going on. Overall I'd say this was a good read

Wrighty says

The last thing that Cassandra Higgins expects out of her Sunday is to be mesmerized at a collectors' convention by a snowglobe. She's enjoying some mommy time, with husband Ken at home tending their brood of four young boys, when she's utterly charmed by the one-of-a kind globe containing figures of three dogs and a little girl with hair the color of her own. She can't resist taking the unique globe home— even if

means wrestling another shopper for it!

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Cassandra says

A very quick read. Interesting plot. Fairly well developed characters. Saw the ending coming from a mile away.

The cover endorsement says: "so joyous... so magical." The "magical" felt a bit more creepy than magical until the halfway point. And the book was far from "joyous" until after page 200. The story spent so long setting up WHY the characters were struggling with their past that I felt weighted down with emotions. Usually this is a good thing as it shows the author has engaged the reader. However, this book claims to be "joyous" and multiple endorsements used synonyms. Sorry, but the book wasn't joyous. I was relieved at the end to find joy in the story but it took a long time to reach that point.

Jill says

Snowglobe Connections Novel # 1 in the series I really enjoyed the book. What happened to the Snowglobe that Cassandra bought at a Collectors' Convention? Had she lost her mind or was God trying to help her move on to a happier time and new relationships? I am so happy this is suppose to be a series as it ended with me wanting to know more about the characters in the book.

I have read Charlene Baumbich's other series, 'Dearest Dorothy'. It was so good. Should be read in order. I wish there were even more books in that series.....I believe the publisher had it end too soon?

This is another of the Christian authors that I enjoy reading.

Nely says

Cassandra Higgins has decided to go to the Collectors' Convention on her own this year since her best friend Margaret can't make. There she finds a snowglobe containing the figures of three dogs and a little girl. Although it is a bit on the expensive side, she decides that she must have it since it reminds her of when she was a young girl and one of the dogs resembles her own pet when she was young. She can't resist purchasing this unique globe - even if means wrestling another shopper for it!

But after a strange—“flurrious” as Cassie deems it—moment happens with the remarkable snowglobe, through flashbacks Cassie is reminded of her beloved Grandpa Wonky, the stray she rescued as a child, and the painful roots of her relationship with her mother, “Bad Betty” Kamrowski.

This was a unique and very enjoyable story. Ms. Baumbich definitely has a talent for bringing small town and its inhabitants to life. This is a story about relationships, about coming to terms with the past and making the best of the present, but mostly it's about healing. All the characters were well-written and even the more unsympathetic ones were likeable in the end. It did take me a while to get into it, but once I was in, I didn't put it down until I finished it. It was a bit on the predictable side but that still did not take away from the charm of it. This was a very light and quick read and although this is categorized as Christian Fiction, it was not preachy and can definitely be enjoyed by everyone.

Mandolin says

Though her life is overflowing with blessings, Cassandra Higgins still struggles with the bleak feelings of guilt, failure and inadequacy left behind by a childhood beset by poverty and the overhanging shadow of her father's suicide. Raised by a stern mother who showed her little understanding and no affection, Cassandra has struggled to create a nurturing home for her own husband and four sons. Memories of a lost childhood pet and failed dreams linger in the recesses of her mind, however, and come hurtling back when triggered by an extraordinary experience with a snowglobe she discovers at a local collector's convention. The brief and strange moment draws her closer to God and makes her begin to question all that she's ever believed about herself, her "bad" mother and her memories. The magic of the moment isn't limited to Cassandra's life. As she undergoes this slow transformation, others around her are changing perceptibly as well - even her own mother and best friend. Through the eyes of several characters, witness the unfolding of a far-reaching miracle that will change hearts, inspire faith, and bring forgiveness and healing.

For a book that focuses on heavy themes of guilt, suicide, barrenness and despair, *Stray Affections* is surprisingly light due to Baumbich's excellent blend of quirky humor with heart-wrenching sadness. Passages that bring tears to the eyes are rapidly followed by those that elicit a shout of laughter, combining to create a book that is altogether heart-warming and delightful. Each of her characters, flawed as they are, touch the reader with their humanity and their search for grace and healing. I thoroughly enjoyed watching their individual journeys and am so glad I discovered this series after Baumbich's other series, *Dearest Dorothy*, ended. (As a "quirky" side note of my own...I'm also grateful reminder this book provides of just how much I enjoy living in the warm warm world of Florida and not in Minnesota where 57 degrees is considered balmy! I'll take a hurricane over a blizzard any day, thank you very much!)
