

Kathryn's Beach

Nadine Laman

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Reviewed by Cherie Fisher for Reader Views (11/06)

Nadine Laman's "Kathryn's Beach" is a very well written story about human pain and tragedy and the ability to not only survive but to learn to live again. Laman's story captures your attention from the first page and keeps it right through to the end.

The main character, Kathryn, was a social worker who specialized in sexual abuse cases. Her last case was five years ago and ended very badly when the judge involved sent the child back to live with her abuser. The child ended up murdered by the perpetrator in a very short period of time. Kathryn is haunted by the last time she saw the little girl in the court room. The little girl screamed when the ruling came down and begged Kathryn to help her. Filled with guilt and horrified by what happened, Kathryn ran from the L.A. area and moved to Nebraska. After 5 years in a mind numbing existence Kathryn decides it is time to move home and pick up her life.

As Kathryn picks up the thread of the life that she left behind, she is thrilled to be back at her beach. The beach has always been therapeutic and important to her and she realizes just how much she has missed it over the last five years. Her old boss, Karen, offers Kathryn her old job back, but she realizes that it comes with too high of a price. Karen helps her find a position working with homeless families in a new program. She loves the feeling of helping people in such a positive atmosphere.

As she moves into her new life, she is given a letter left by the Judge Jones, the judge who sent the little girl back home. The judge writes this letter to Kathryn right before he kills himself. Kathryn and the others from her old job realize that the case is not closed and that they must find out what the letter means to put it to rest. They bravely follow the leads in the letter, find more tragedy and the reason the judge was so difficult to work with.

At the same time, Kathryn reacquaints herself with her best friend Maggie, finds love for the first time in years with an Irishman named Ioseph and once again faces tragedy in her life. She finally decides that her friend Maggie is right "Life is good; not always easy, but good". This book captures human heroism and strength at its best and I highly recommend it.