



The Parting Gift

Evan Fallenberg

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"An unabashed tale that does not pull punches and looks at love's underside...This breathless story should only be read in one sitting. It hits hard and never lets up. Terse, brusque, etched on one's inner thigh with an old serrated knife." --Andr? Aciman, author of *Call Me by Your Name*

This erotic tale of jealousy, obsession, and revenge is suffused with the rich flavors and intoxicating scents of Israel's Mediterranean coast.

An unnamed narrator writes a letter to an old college friend, Adam, with whom he has been staying since his abrupt return to the States from Israel. Now that the narrator is moving on to a new location, he finally reveals the events that led him to Adam's door, set in motion by a chance encounter with Uzi, a spice merchant whose wares had developed a cult following.

From his first meeting with Uzi, the narrator is overwhelmed by an animal attraction that will lead him to derail his life, withdraw from friends and extend his stay in a small town north of Tel Aviv. As he becomes increasingly entangled in Uzi's life--and by extension the lives of Uzi's ex-wife and children--his passion turns sinister, ultimately threatening all around him.

Written in a circuitous style that keeps you guessing until the end, *The Parting Gift* is a page-turner and a shrewd exploration of the roles men assume, or are forced to assume, as lovers, as fathers, as Israelis, as Palestinians.

The Parting Gift Details

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From Reader Review The Parting Gift for online ebook

Kevin says

THE PARTING GIFT is a feverish and hypnotic epistolary novel, and a tantalizing literary treat. While wholly its own creation, readers may feel the influences of Patricia Highsmith (the sense of mounting dread) and Edmund White (the white-hot sexual encounters are salacious, surprising and erotic). An unnamed gay narrator who has been living with his straight college friend for the past four months has decided to move on and, as a parting gift, he's decided to write a letter explaining what brought him to his friend's doorstep.

The narrator drops out of grad school "under highly unpleasant circumstances" just months before graduation. Vacationing with friends in Tel Aviv, he meets Uzi, a roughhewn spice merchant, and immediately seduces him. "We were a mess," he writes, "a heaving, sweating, panting, quivering mess. And I was hooked." Uzi has two ex-wives and five kids (including an anorexic daughter and drug-selling son) but makes room in his home for his new romance. As their relationship builds, however, so does the narrator's mistrust. And this paranoia leads him down dark alleys. As he writes to his college friend: "Jealousy is a dangerous motive, and revenge its sharpest weapon."

Evan Fallenberg (When We Danced on Water) has crafted a haunting, emotionally satisfying and beautifully written story of obsessive love. Few readers will be able to stop reading this short novel before its surprising climax. THE PARTING GIFT's vivid characters and their pyretic emotions make this an incredibly haunting novel.

A haunting, erotic and beautifully written epistolary novel about a gay affair in Tel Aviv that turns into an obsessive quest for revenge.

One complaint: WORST COVER EVER.

Nikola says

You can also find this review **on my book blog**.

When it comes to books that feature LGBTQ+ themes I'm all ears so getting a chance to read The Parting Gift was very exciting for me. Oh boy, was this book brilliant! I have to mention the hardcover copy and how brilliantly it was designed. Wow, just wow. Well done Other Press!

The story centers around an unknown narrator who upon coming back from Israel crashes in his friend's apartment and the book is written in a form of one long letter addressed to that friend, Adam. Since our narrator has found a new location to live in he decides to leave an explanation as to why he came to crash at his place for four months. Our narrator tells Adam the story of Uzi, a spice merchant he met during his trip as well as meeting Uzi's family, of love, of obsession, of dedication and more.

I think that my summary is enough to read before going in and that's why I kept it short. I've no idea what's happening lately because I've been reading fantastic books – let's not jinx this because I want to read more fantastic books in the future. I read *The Parting Gift* in a day because it was so fast-paced and so good that I couldn't look away. I just made breaks to make more cups of tea. Fallenberg writes so masterfully and keeps

your attention at all times and the way he crafted this tale was fantastic. I love how he created the characters in it especially our unknown narrator who is so fascinating and whose psyche I loved examining throughout the book. Unknown narrator is so interesting and his actions made me question many things about him. The story is developed very well and there's no dull moment in it. If I was to compare this book to other ones I would definitely say that it reminded me of *Gone Girl* in a way – now I know everything is compared to *Gone Girl* nowadays but this book really left me with that impression. When I reached the end of *The Parting Gift* I found myself wanting more and exactly this ability the author has to make the reader want more is what amazes me. I honestly don't know what else to say because I fear I'll ruin your experience with this book so just do yourself a favour and pick this book up.

The Parting Gift is a fascinating tale of love, paranoia, jealousy and deviance set in a in a small town north of Tel Aviv.

*I would like to thank the publisher **Other Press** for providing me with a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. All opinions written here are my own and weren't influenced by anything.*

Susan says

This is a riveting book situated in Israel; a man, who is gay, ends up moving - well, kind of living in but not in a committed way - to Israel. At very loose ends, having just been kicked out of grad school for reasons that are never made entirely clear but involve another student in a very unhappy way (never totally explained but it doesn't make you feel great about the protagonist.). The whole book is a letter to his grad school friend who is in a conventional heterosexual marriage - but, as he recounts his steamy sex with men (and men who have always previously had a preference for women) there's a taunting quality, and clearly he's trying to provoke this "straight" friend into admitting an attraction to him. There is sex, and sex and sex and a beautiful setting on the Mediterranean and families involved and a lot of deception and a lot of rage.

Angel Hench says

I love that this book is written in one chapter as a long letter to a friend. The letter is the author's story of two bisexual men engaged in a hot and steamy relationship, at least for the first half. This story takes place in Israel and the author makes sure you can feel and smell and see the atmosphere and the unique settings in the novel. There are some really, really despicable people in this book who take terrible actions against one another, so your liking of this will depend on how well you can stomach people being terrible to each other.

(A review copy of this book was provided by the publisher.)

Rachel says

Love or lust? Desire or jealousy? Which defines the relationship between the main characters in Evan Fallenberger's "The Parting Gift" (Other Press)? This wild, sexual, erotic roller coaster will leave readers gasping for breath.

See the rest of my review at <http://www.thereportergroup.org/Artic...>

Josh Hereth says

A haunting, beautiful, and erotic epistolary novel. There's a reason it smacks that André Aciman quote on the cover, and it's because *The Parting Gift* is doing a lot of the same things you find in *Call Me By Your Name* or *Enigma Variations*. TPG remains almost suffocatingly close to the main character and his raw affair with the Israeli spice merchant, and I loved every second of it.

Julie says

The Parting Gift is a firecracker of a book, the likes of which I've never read. In this epistolary novel, an unnamed narrator describes the events that have led him to living on the couch of a college friend. We know the narrator left graduate school "under highly unpleasant circumstances" and had decided on a fresh start in Israel but has abruptly returned to the US. Spellbound by a chance encounter with an Israeli spice merchant named Uzi, the narrator derails his new plans to embark on an all-consuming love affair.

Told with amazing sensory details, at times mouth-watering and at times pungent, the narrator shops and cooks and becomes a helpmate in every way to the spice merchant, wending his way into the lives of Uzi's children, ex-wives and business associates. As in life, the honeymoon period of red-hot passion does not last long, and as we get to know the narrator, new layers of his character are revealed.

Throughout, the prose is suggestive, sexy, at turns threatening and manipulative – comparisons to *Lolita* are apt – and compels the reader to keep turning the pages. The author also does a great job at spanning the cultural divides of an American, an Israeli spice merchant, a Palestinian laborer, and a well-off Israeli Arab.

This book is highly recommended for anyone interested in themes of modern masculinity, identity, jealousy, and betrayal. PS – For book club coordinators: this novel will spark a great discussion IMHO!

Ricardo says

Received a free copy from NetGalley

You know those books you read that you wish kept going and going because they are so good? That feeling of being full and at the same time craving for more at the same time? The feeling that you are positive you know what's going to happen next but at the same time you can't put the book down because you can't wait to either confirm your suspicions or excitedly find out you were totally wrong? This is one of those books.

The author does an INCREDIBLE job with the writing and manages to draw the reader in. The characters are developed exquisitely and the setting is described so well that I could see it in my mind. The emotions at the center of the book, namely obsession, love, jealousy, passion, revenge, lust, pain, and so many others don't need a description because we feel them as the characters feel them. This is truly an excellent read

Sofia says

Not erotic per se but surely kind of obsessive and self absorbed. Delusion or not, I'm left wondering, which is part of the charm. I think our narrator only told us what he wanted to and we're left to pick up clues where ever we can. Cleverly done Fallenberg.

While his narrator is shifting here and there, telling us all and hiding what he wants, we also get snapshots inside people's lives. Must remember that it's only a picture and there is much more to delve for.

Reggie says

Soooooooo this book I found to be great except the last 2 pages. It is an epistolary novel written by an unnamed narrator who flees America after, at first, an undescribed event and goes to Israel where while shopping at a spice market, he meets Uzi, the type of man who when his friends say they're ready to leave, he tells them I'm staying. He and Uzi, ex husband to 2 women and father of 5, start this torrid affair. I really enjoyed this book for its erotic heat, observations of roles in relationships, and lovely earthy writing but then it veers off into hell hath no fury like a lover scorned-land. And then it kinda went off the rails those last 2 pages even though I understand it. Would I still read it again for a first time knowing the ending? Hell yeah!!!

Meg says

Picked this up on a whim. I liked the writing and was pulled along. Hard to recommend to others since it feels like it was a perfect little nugget at just the right time but I don't know why I liked it.

Gerhard says

Huh? That ending? Review to follow. How To Torpedo Your Own Novel.

Gina says

An absolutely riveting read; from start to finish a spellbinding tale of the deepest human emotions: love, jealousy, betrayal and revenge. I read it in two days and would have read it in one had I been able. The writing is flawless and the narration carries you along on a knife-edge. Highly recommended.

Lark Benobi says

Like many books I've read recently, *The Parting Gift* perfectly executes what it sets out to do, even if I personally didn't entirely enjoy the experience of reading it. I feel my original review, below, didn't quite do it justice, because no matter how disturbing the story is to me, it's a perfect little book.

Here is a very tight and tense novel of obsessive jealousy, where sexual encounters are battlegrounds, and where sex acts are the way characters exert power over one another. Because this is an epistolary novel everything that happens is filtered through one mind, the mind of a man who is extremely perceptive, and entirely amoral, and obsessively jealous. It is a revenge story, but one where the avenger seems far more morally questionable than those whom he believes have wronged him. This extreme story is set in a suburb of Tel Aviv where relations between Jews and Arabs and in particular Palestinian Arabs come into play in terms of power dynamics and sexual dynamics. The narrator is American and not entirely fluent in Hebrew. His foreign-ness to the dynamics of culture and language add another layer of tension to his narrative. He acts decisively even though he is clearly an outsider who has no reason to be sure of his perceptions of others.

Frequently with books that leave me feeling unhappy and unsettled I'm at a loss about what to do with these silly star ratings but usually I come out thinking if I can honestly say "this book perfectly executes its intention, no matter how I felt about it personally" then I should probably call it a 5-star read.

I didn't love this book, but I damn sure won't forget it.

Original review:

This novel gives all the pleasure in reading it as does drinking ipecac or picking at a scab or chewing the inside of your cheek until it bleeds.

Jessica Sullivan says

Like a bitter and vengeful version of *Call Me By Your Name*, this tight novel provides an almost claustrophobic account of the narrator's passionate, obsessive, erotic months spent with his lover, Uzi.

Written in epistolary form to the unnamed narrator's college friend, he recalls his doomed relationship with Uzi, a successful spice merchant in Israel. Immediately drawn to Uzi's gruff nature and brute masculinity, he puts aside everything to be with him and gradually entangles himself with Uzi's professional and personal life.

As his infatuation with Uzi grows, he begins growing suspicious that Uzi is being unfaithful, and his actions turn to a callous vengefulness fueled by his envy and desire.

This is the ultimate unreliable narrator, and comparisons to *Lolita*'s Humbert Humbert are certainly earned. It's fascinating the way he distorts his recollection of events, intent on painting himself as the "good guy" in his own story. Of course, the inclination to do this is deeply human, and that relatability creates a sense of discomfort for the reader.

Complex and morally ambiguous, *The Parting Gift* is darkly tantalizing both intellectually and on a much more primal level.
