



A Stranger's Gift

Anna Schmidt

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You'll be swept away by the endearing characters created by award-winning author Anna Schmidt. On the heels of a horrific hurricane, Hester Detlef, field director for the Mennonite Disaster Service, blows into the life of self-made, shunned Amish man John Hafner. Will she find a way through his shield and into his heart? Although the hurricane has left John homeless and badly injured, the last thing he wants is some do-gooder Mennonite woman intruding in his life. Will his impatience with her intention of restoring his faith and property keep him from accepting this beguiling stranger's kindness?

A Stranger's Gift Details

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From Reader Review A Stranger's Gift for online ebook

Maureen Timerman says

What an entertaining read! Hester Detweiler is a Mennonite and has embraced the faith of giving. She is no longer young, 33, and is giving her life to helping others. Her Dad, Arlen, is a Pastor at their church, and a woodworker. He has brought Samuel into his business, also as a prospective husband for Hester. They live in Pinecrest Fl, in an Amish/Mennonite Community, and Hester is working with the MCC. As the story opens their is a devastation Hurricane...Hester...on its way with a direct hit of their area. There is a banned Amishman, living a secluded life nearby. Hester is sent to see if she can get John Steiner to leave. This is a story of forgiveness, and rebuilding, and following God's Will. A very enjoyable read!

I received this book from the Publisher, Barbour Books, and was not required to give a positive review.

Wilani Wahl says

An enjoyable read. Having visited Minecraft two months ago. It was so fun reading a book where I could picture things so vividly. The author captured that feel perfectly. I cannot wait to begin reading the next book in this series.

Judy says

A Stranger's Gift by Anna Schmidt

Book 1 – The Women of Minecraft

John Steiner was a loner. He had left his Amish community in Indiana after his mother's death and bought property in Florida. As Hurricane Hester is building up in the area a few people try to get John to leave but he refuses to go to a shelter and leave the home he has spent so much time and money fixing up. After the hurricane hits and his property is in dire need of help, he refuses the Mennonite disaster crews and anyone else who offers help. The young woman who tried to get him to leave before the hurricane and has returned once again is rightly named Hester. She seems as strong and stubborn as the same named hurricane. John has changed his clothing style but otherwise he has stayed with his Amish upbringing. And yet he feels unbalanced and unsure where he truly belongs. He had started this journey a few years back after reading Walden: Life in the Woods by Henry David Thoreau. A story of a man who goes away from civilization as well.

Hester Detweiler is busy doing for everyone she can. As she helps run the disaster group her father started and working with others in the County. She went to a non-church school to become a nurse and some in her community feel that the Pastor's daughter works too much with the outside world. To Hester it is helping people. She has trouble containing her anger when she has to "babysit" a stubborn man who did not leave his home and now needs help as he recovers, just because his aunt is a Congresswoman! John does not want help or appreciate it and yet she is forced to help him. She also has Samuel, a man who came from Pennsylvania and works building furniture with her father. She knows the intention was for the two of them

to marry but she does not feel romantic towards him.

These two characters seem to lose all their peaceful heritage traits when they are anywhere in the same vicinity. At one point John does see the need to start helping those who stuck with him and helped him, he sees how selfish he has been. There are many unique characters such as Margery Barker- she runs boat charters and treats John as a son, Zeke who is homeless but from a wealthy family, the local crabby lady Olive Crowder who is always negative to Hester. This book also gave a view of all the workings before and after a hurricane and the different disaster organizations.

<http://justjudysjumbles.blogspot.com/...>

**Book received through NetGalley for review.

Ruth says

I read the book the weekend of Tropical Storm Lee, which also happened to be close to the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, so it fit right in with what was happening. We watch Hester prepare for the Hurricane and then help people get back on their feet afterwards. We see politicians come in, including John's aunt, who is in Congress. I liked it when she said that coming in for photo ops is what politicians do "when the media pushes our buttons and we don't know what else to do" (remember this is a galley and the final wording may be different).

Hester is an Mennonite who dresses much like the Amish but lives in a house with electricity and has a college education. Her people worship in churches, whereas the Amish worship in homes. Hester is an anomaly among her closely-knit people--a woman in leadership, a woman with a position outside the home (even though she is a volunteer and not paid). She is an old maid more due to circumstances than choice. John was raised Amish but went his own way. He is determined to show that he can live without other people.

In a lot of ways, the book is a study in contrasts. John has two books he saves during the Hurricane--Walden Pond and The Bible. John rejects people; Hester is always trying to help. Neither of them really fit in. Both need to heal.

I thought the characters in the book were well done as were the descriptions of life after a major storm. It's a romance novel so I figured out pretty quickly where it was going, but you read books like this for the ride, not the destination. Grade: B.

I'd like to thank the publisher for making a review copy available via NetGalley. I was not obligated to write a positive review (or any review at all).

Jerry says

An enjoyable Floridian romance.

Rhonda says

A Stranger's Gift by Anna Schmidt

5 STARS

It makes me want to go help more or at least get out and make a goal again to make at least 52 hats this year for those in need. I enjoyed reading this book to start the new year.

John Steiner has spent the last two years since he moved to Florida fixing up the old house, orchards, gardens and packing warehouse. He wants to be alone and self sustaining on his land. He is Amish but left his church and state when they shunned him.

Two different people came and told him he need to ride out the hurricane in a shelter. John refused he went to a shelter the last time and it was crowded and he didn't have to go.

Hester Detweiler is in charge of one of the Mennonite charities that help in times of disaster. Because John's Aunt's is a Senator she was asked to go warn him. Hester resented having to go warn him and than he refused to go. She felt there were others who needed her help more.

Margery Barker is a widow that lives and runs a fishing charters close to John

and trying for the past two years to friend him. She was the first to try and get him into a shelter.

Well the hurricane hit his place hard. The river was coming into his house fast as he was gathering stuff to take upstairs with him the roof and a wall crashed in on him. He was lucky to have survived holding onto a beam. all of his trees the old and the new ones destroyed. Could not get to town by road with all the trees down across his road. Chicken coop destroyed, damage to the warehouse. Broke his wrist and had to be airlifted out.

He had to learn again that he had to accept help and give it. Forgive himself for his mother's death and realize that he can trust others again.

It is a Christian story of helping others, relying on prayer and scriptures. That positive things can come out of our trials. I would read gladly more books from Anna. I was given this ebook to read in exchange of honest review from Netgalley.

11/01/2011 PUB Barbour Publishing, Inc.

Patty Hearts Dave says

Hester Detweiler lived in Pinecraft, an Amish and Mennonite community in Sarasota, Florida. Her father, Arlen, was the pastor of a Mennonite church in town. She had cared for her mother five years before she passed away. She was different than a lot of Mennonite women. She went to nursing school. She was over thirty and not married. She was headstrong and even a little bossy when things needed to get done.

Hester was the lead volunteer for MCC, the Mennonite Central Committee. The MCC helped with disaster relief, community development, and international aid. The MCC's latest project was in Hester's hometown. The area was under a hurricane watch, a hurricane named Hester was brewing along the Gulf Coast.

Hester had many things to get done for the MCC in case the hurricane hit, but her boss sent her to John Steiner's house to take him to a shelter. John was getting special treatment because of his aunt's political position and Hester was annoyed. John lived alone. He was trying to live totally self sufficient like in Henry David Thoreau's book, *Walden: Life in the Woods*. The moment John and Hester met they got on each other's nerves.. Hester wanted to help John, but he wanted solidarity. Hester's felt her calling in life was to help people. John's goal in life was to be alone.

Even after the hurricane hit and destroyed most of his property, John refused help. Slowly, John's attitude changed after Samuel Brubaker left his camper for him to stay in. Samuel came to Minecraft because Hester's father was hoping Hester would marry him. He worked with Arlen in his wood shop.

This story is about a community coming together to help family, friends, and neighbors recover from a devastating storm. Everyone involved seemed to be changed after the hurricane. Hester, John and Samuel discovered what they truly wanted to do with their lives.

I think anyone who knows the Sarasota area of Florida would enjoy this book because of the way it is described throughout the story. Having not read any stories about the Mennonites, I wasn't sure if I would like this book. I can tell you that I was pleasantly surprised. I think *A Stranger's Gift* was very enjoyable to read. I liked all the characters. Hester was struggling to be the person God wanted her to be. John was running away from who he was. This book is about finding love when it's not expected and trusting God to work out our lives.

I received a free copy of this book from NetGalley for my honest review.

Ang says

Lovely read

This was truly a great read, one that encouraged me to think about my life and my faith. Sometimes Amish and Mennonite books seem separate from being applicable to my life, but the people in this book were very real and appealing. I wish the entire series was available for Kindle.

pam says

i did like this book. It was a mennonite book. i have not read that many mennonite books but i really enjoyed this one.

It was about Hester she is the head of the mcc which is a organization that helps after a disaster happens. she is also a nurse.

there was a hurricane coming and she was trying to get people into shelters this one particular man named John did not want to go he wanted to stay in his house because they have had warnings before and nothing came so he decided to stay. Hester and her dad left to help other people. The hurricane came and was very bad. Hester's boss told her she had to go and see if John was ok because his aunt is congress women and she is worried. Hester did not want to but her boss said she had to so she went out there he was hurt and his house was destroyed. She was so busy getting him medical attention that the water was going to flood her family and friends houses.

Hester thought John was selfless and only cared about him. John did not care about Hester she was always trying to help. Can Hester change John and did John come at a good time to change Hester.
this is the first book in the series can not wait for book two.

Janet C says

Hester Detlef, a local Mennonite volunteer coordinator for the disaster relief in Minecraft, Florida, was not like the Old Order Mennonite with limited education. She had a nursing degree.

She had avoided her father's plans to marry Samuel Longbecker.

When a hurricane hits Minecraft and the surrounding areas, John Steiner is thrown into her path. Both are strong minded, hard workers but grounded with good Christian values.

The book seems to be based on the saying: There is a man who is on the roof of his house during a flood or hurricane, and his neighbor comes along in a rowboat to rescue him. 'No, God will rescue me,' the man says. Next come a crew in a speedboat, but again he says 'No, God will rescue me'. Finally a helicopter hovers overhead to winch him up, but he sends that away too. So, the guy drowns, goes to heaven and is really upset. He asks God, "why didn't you rescue me?", and God says "I sent a rowboat, a speedboat and a helicopter – what were you waiting for?".

This was the first time I have read Anna Schmidt's books. It was ok...although it did not grab my attention enough and I had to fight myself to finish it. I did enjoy learning more about the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and their other welfare programs and how they work.

Abbie says

3.5 Stars

Hester loves helping people and is the lead person in her area for MCC. She dedicates hours and hours to this and because of this she is still single. Her father hopes she will settle down with Samuel a local carpenter. Yet she fears if she does get married she will not be able to continue the work she does. The book opens with a strong hurricane heading for her area and she is hard at working preparing. She is asked to check on a hermit who used to be Amish. He is refusing to leave his home.

John does not want help from anyone he just wants to live off the land and be left alone. Even after Hester tells him to leave he refused and is lucky to survey the hurricane with his life. His property is in shambles and he is injured yet he still refuses help. Yet Hester and John keep crossing paths. Will their dislike for each other relent and turn into something more?

I was looking forward to reading this book because I have an interest in the weather and also I grew up Mennonite so I know about MCC and MDS. I liked Hester yet felt a little sorry for her as even though she loves her work part of the reason she works so hard was because after her mother dies she wanted to work to make her proud so to speech so I just wanted to say to her slow down and relax a little. From her first meeting with John she does not like him and he is not fond of her either. The book spends a lot of time talking about MCC and MDS and the work they do. While interesting I got bored at times and wanted the

plot to move along.

Hester and John disliked each other for most of the book and then suddenly John has a change of heart and he and Hester start to get along. I did enjoy the last 20% of the book but it seemed to take forever to get there. I did like the characters and I enjoyed learning more about the conservative Mennonites and how their customs etc. work. I will be interested to see what the plot of the next book will be.

<http://abbiesreadingcorner.com/2011/1...>

Marianne says

A Stranger's Gift

A beautifully written story of the plain people in the Pinecraft/Sarasota area and how they all join hands, regardless of church affiliation to help each other and their neighbours during and after a hurricane. Anna Schmidt cleverly uses words to draw you into each of the characters lives. I feel as if I have seen the aftermath of disaster, and understand in part the workings of the different organizations that lend helping hands. I felt the frustration of people flocking to the area to help in the first few hours, then leaving them to struggle on alone. I chuckled as Hester tangled horns with Olive (aptly named) and wept with Rosalyn in her disappointments.

Anna is a very skilled author and I am looking forward to her next book in the Women of Pinecraft series which is due out in May 2012. I am happy to hear that it continues the story of two of Hester's best friends, but felt that this story ended well in that it did not leave the reader hanging...wondering what happened next. I thoroughly enjoyed this novel, and would recommend this to any one who love reading about the plain people. This is not a story about the Amish.

I received this ebook through NetGalley for the purpose of reviewing. I was not required to write a positive review, only an honest one. The opinions expressed are my own.

Iola says

You will have heard the old joke about the guy who is on the roof of his house during a flood or hurricane, and his neighbour comes along in a rowboat to rescue him. 'No, God will rescue me,' the man says. Next come a crew in a speedboat, but again he says 'No, God will rescue me'. Finally a helicopter hovers overhead to winch him up, but he sends that away too. So, the guy drowns, goes to heaven and is really upset. He asks God, "why didn't you rescue me?", and God says "I sent a rowboat, a speedboat and a helicopter – what were you waiting for?". The first part of joke forms the basis for the plot of this novel (well, you can hardly kill off the hero!).

A Stranger's Gift begins with Hester Detweiler working with the Mennonite Central Committee, a national disaster relief organisation, to prepare for Hurricane Hester, which is due to hit her hometown of Pinecraft, Florida. Hester is the local MCC leader, a role that causes some consternation among the more conservative members of the Mennonite congregation her father pastors. They believe that a woman of her age should be

channelling her energies into a husband and children, but Hester, at 33, shows no signs of marring (even though there are whispers that her father expects her to marry Samuel Brubaker, the new carpenter he has recently hired).

John Steiner has been banned from his Amish community because he wants to experiment with self-sufficient living in the style of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden: A Life in the Woods*. He has spent the last two years working alone on his property near Minecraft, repairing and restoring it, and has no intention of leaving despite the impending arrival of Hurricane Hester.

Although the Amish and the Mennonite faiths are linked by a common Anabaptist heritage, plain dress and a simple, separatist lifestyle, the differences are clear. Hester, a trained nurse, has a college education whereas most Amish leave school when they reach thirteen. The Mennonites also appear to interact much more with the outside community, as evidenced by Hester's voluntary work for an aid charity. However, Hester is still frustrated by the weight of expectation upon her, to fulfil her place in "a community where sameness was not only preferred by also expected", when her personal longing was for "something beyond the norm". John has his own frustrations and an overwhelming sense of guilt that he must overcome. As John and Hester get to know each other, they find that perhaps they can work together for the good of others.

This novel is not at all preachy. Obviously, when a novel is based on the lives of a very conservative Christian denomination there is going to be some religious or spiritual content, but it is not overwhelming or out of place. It is a story of two individuals who don't quite fit in with the way they were raised, and who individually and together come to realise (and convince those around them) that God can work through many different types of people. Overall, this was a very enjoyable novel and I would certainly read more from Anna Schmidt. The second novel in The Women of Minecraft series, *A Sister's Forgiveness*, is due to be published in May 2012.

Thanks to NetGalley and Barbour Publishing for providing a free ebook to review.

This review also appears on my blog, www.christianreads.blogspot.com.

Jac (For Love and Books) says

I really wanted to love this book! It sounded great, and I normally really enjoy the Amish books! (I think it may have something to do with the idea that I have such an obsession with electronics and can't leave the house without my iPad and my Cell Phone! So it's nice to imagine the polar opposite! At least that's the excuse I give.) Of course, this is actually a Mennonite book, involving a shunned Amish man, so there's a bit of a difference.

I loved the story of the hurricane, and the unusual setting of Florida! I also enjoyed that John had a political aunt who looked out for him (which I did find odd as well, considering he was an Amish man who was shunned, but as I read on it made more and more sense. I think Anna Schmidt did a fabulous job of story telling with that story line!)

It took me a little while to warm up to Hester, and even longer to warm up to John. I think that's what was difficult for me with this book, that the character development just hit a snag for me. But by the end of the book, it had worked itself out for me and I really enjoyed it.

All in all, this book was a fun weekend read, I really enjoyed the setting and much of the story! It was a very unique story about Plain People, and I look forward to the rest of the series!

Sandra "Jeanz" says

After a horrific hurricane, Hester Detlef who is the field director for the Mennonite Disaster Service, blows into the life of self-made, shunned Amish man John Hafner. Will Hester find a way through his shield and into John's heart? Although the hurricane has left John homeless and badly injured, the last thing he wants is some do-gooder, busy-body Mennonite woman intruding in his life. Will John's impatience with Hester's intention of restoring his faith and property keep him from accepting this beguiling stranger's kindness?

The quote I read about this book was "You'll be swept away by the endearing characters created by award-winning author Anna Schmidt" that quote was certainly true, the way in which the book was written made you care about the characters and what happened to them. I did enjoy the book, however I would point out that there are a lot of religious references in the book. At times these references did get a bit too much and spoilt the flow of the story somewhat. The story/plot of the book was really good and enjoyable in the most part, but in my opinion the religion is kind of pushed to the fore a bit too much. The religious references were put over in a preaching way too. Having said all that I would like to read more in this series and other books by this author.

This book was reviewed by Ena (my mum) for my blog!!
