



Home for Christmas

Andrew M. Greeley

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Petey Pat Kane and Mariana Pia Pelligrino have been in love with each other their whole lives. But on a night that is supposed to be one of the best of their lives, Peter makes a choice that forces him to leave Chicago--and Mariana--behind. Guilt leads him into the Army, where he becomes Captain Kane, war hero. But nothing can make him forget his love for Mariana.

On his third deployment in Iraq, Peter is injured and finds himself both alive and dead on a wondrous spiritual journey where he is given a second chance at life from God Himself. With Christmas approaching, time is running out for Peter to complete the most important mission of his life: convincing himself that he and Mariana were meant to share a special message of love with the world.

Home for Christmas Details

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From Reader Review Home for Christmas for online ebook

Nancy Brady says

3½ stars actually. An American soldier is deployed three times to Iraq and is fatally injured in his last deployment. He is considered dead for 9½ minutes, and these minutes become critical to his change of heart, life, and attitude. His time with the One assures him of a loving, laughing God, and that he'd best do somethings he has put off way too long. A bit of a tearjerker, but no less than what I'd expect of an Andrew Greeley novel.

?Karen says

I won an "Advance Uncorrected Proof" of this book through Goodreads First Reads, and read it in about 5 hours. Any Greeley book I've read has been a satisfying experience, as was this. I would give this 3 1/2 stars. I mainly enjoyed the part where the hero gets "killed" in Iraq, only to have a near-death experience, and he comes back to life to fulfill his destiny. The description of the entry into this after life was quite interesting and entertaining. I wished this part of the story was expanded on more. The characters as children and teenagers were empathetic, but as adults it was difficult to feel anything for them.

Marsha says

I won this book courtesy of Goodreads' FirstReads program and frankly, I'm glad I did. I never would have picked it up off the shelves on my own.

The chapters are relatively short so the book progresses fast. I thought at first it would be just another cheesy Christmas romance story with a soldier who comes home to find the love of his life from his high school days has waited for him all this time and theirs is a love written in the stars.

Fortunately, this story is more complicated than that. The author delves into the small-town drama, corruption and violence from the main character's high school days, when Petey Pat's experiences drove him out of town. He became a soldier in Iraq until the day he was injured by a suicide bomber's car exploding. He then spends time in some sort of limbo where his body is dead on earth and his spirit is in Heaven, or at least, in the "beyond."

This is as far as I have read but now I'm curious to know how he survives. Obviously Petey Pat's soul comes back to earth because there's much more of the book left to read.

One of the good things about this book is it has gotten me thinking more about the distinctions between Heaven and earth and what God is like. It made me realize it's okay for me to ask lots of questions too. Why did God allow us freedom of choice if it meant bad things would occur? The author makes an interesting point: God cannot be a contradiction. Meaning that God can put elements together to shape the world but he cannot overrule the intrinsic forces and "rules" that exist in nature. I had never thought of it like that before.

Thanks to Father Greeley for adding many insights and--I hope--facts about the Catholic church. I am

learning a lot and thinking as I read this book.

Donna says

As the 2nd in my "trilogy" of holiday books to be read this season, *Home for the Holidays* (a Goodreads WIN for me!), was another easy, quick read, with an upbeat ending. But, then again, what else do we want for the holidays?! This book however holds some added intrigue, as we are offered a glimpse into one man's view of the after life, and are introduced to a God full of mercy, love, and a great sense of humor who welcomes all.

The story revolves around Lt. Colonel Pete Kane, who we follow from 2nd grade in Poplar Grove IL, through his multiple acts of heroism in Iraq, and back home again for Christmas. It is not until well into the story that we learn what made him flee Poplar Grove, and the love of his life, Marianna Pia Pelligrino, in search of personal redemption. It is in his 3rd deployment to Iraq, that Pete is injured and experiences death for nine and a half minutes. What happens during that time, which the author, Andrew Greeley, admits is a subjective view, will leave even the most skeptical reader wanting to know more. As Greeley says, near-death experiences don't necessarily prove there is life after death, but they do provide "attractive hints and wonderful stories." I would recommend *Home for the Holidays* as just that - a wonderful, holiday story.

Joanne says

I wanted to like this book, given the author's profession, his age, and his tragic accident. However, I wonder if the good Father was unable to revise this book before publication. His foreword is dated Feb. 2008, which is about 9 months before his accident. Perhaps his business agents or family decided to go ahead and publish an unpolished manuscript.

In my opinion the characters seem undeveloped. The second graders do not sound like real 7 year olds. For example, the main character Petey, at age 7, says this: "Most men don't like smart women. I am an exception." And 7 year old Mariana says, "It's my bitch of a mother's fault!" Most 7 year olds do not talk in that manner, thank goodness. And the adult characters do not sound realistic either. Here's just one example: adult Mariana says, "Peter, how can I walk away from you? You are my salvation!" To which Peter replies, "You're mine, woman, & don't you ever try to get away from me again." Cue the music as the scene fades away. Soap opera, anyone?

The author employed an interview style during some sections that was painful to read. In other sections he wrote the story as conversations between characters, without indicating who was talking, which lead to guessing and rereading to figure out who was talking & what it all meant.

The author's description of near death experiences was interesting and perhaps the only reason to read this book. The author also makes his political leanings crystal clear, so if you are a big fan of Pres. Bush, you will be offended.

And, if you think you might want to read a nice Christmas book, be warned that Christmas is only a part of the plot in the last few pages of the book.

Rich says

Maybe I'm getting prudish in my old age, but a parish priest calling a member of his congregation a "bitch" just dropped a huge clanger. (Especially for one who is characterized by himself, and his ecclesiastical leader as someone who cares more about the members of his parish than he does about the doctrine. [Another clanger.]) Or maybe I just imagine all Catholic priests as Father O'Malley--Bing Crosby's beloved character from *Going My Way* and *The Bells of St. Mary's*.

Too often, Greeley's politics showed through in the story and it hurt the flow of the story. The main distraction was his obvious disapproval of the current war in Iraq. And it would have been nice to see if he could put in one sympathetic character who has an opposite point of view.

One of the main points here is the NDE of one of the main characters. While it was interesting--giving Greeley's perspective on what it might be like to meet God, during a NDE, again there were a few things that jarred the sensibilities here, mainly a person living in the Heavenly City, for lack of a better name, casually using the word "fuck." It just felt out of place.

While the title implies Christmas, there is actually very little to do with Christmas here. I much preferred his "Star Light."

Debbie says

This was a very quick read and really makes you think about what our next step is in this life, and Who is directing it. But I'm glad to think that there is laughter, and if you what to know what I'm reffering to....well read the book.

Diane says

Having enjoyed Fr. Greeley's novels since I was a teenager, I was delighted to find this on a Christmas display in the library. What saddened me was learning of Fr. Greeley's death over a year ago, on May 29, 2013. I believe this is the last fiction book written by this very prolific author. (And if I am wrong about the actual "last", it certainly is one of the last as it was published in 2009, a year following an accident which led to a lengthy confinement and eventual death.) Knowing that there would never be another Christmas story from Fr. Greeley certainly colored my reading of the tale.

All of these personal feeling aside, this was a quick and enjoyable read. A "near death experience" takes our hero (literally a hero....decorated war veteran) into the transcendent presence of God. In the introduction to the story, Fr. Greeley states he wrote from the point of view of an agnostic. But the image he paints of a laughing, merciful God resonates within me. Old wrongs are righted, old scores are settled with grace, and the ending is happy. (It's Christmas! Of course a happy ending is in the pages!)

This was a very typical Greeley novel. If you have enjoyed his work in the past (as I have) you will enjoy this one.

And might I also say...rest in peace Father Blackie. I'll miss hearing about YOUR Chicago archdiocese.

Debbie Maskus says

This is a Christmas novella by a Chicago priest about a young boy and girl and their love for one another. The girl is from a wealthy Italian family, and the boy is from a poor family with a drunken, abusive father. Instead of a happy life after high school graduation, the lives are marred by a car accident on prom night. The boy joins the Army and goes to Iraq, and the girl completes college and law school. The boy, Pete is wounded two times, and is basically brain dead, but returns to life after nine minutes. This is a simple example of a near death experience. The writing is very juvenile, and I pressed on to finish this book. Not very impressive writing for a religious man.

Jo says

I picked this book up by mistake – looking for a book about a New Zealand movie of the same title.

Thank God for the mistakes we make in life.

When I realised that the book was written by Andrew M. Greeley, a Catholic priest since 1954, I groaned.

Yes – I really did.

I have nothing against religion or books about religion, I just generally do not read a lot of them anymore.

But I ran out of other books, and being an insomniac – well the other night at 3 a.m. I opened the cover.

I read, and read, and read.

Like I said thank God for mistakes.

This is one of the most delightful books of the day.

Petey Pat Kane is one of the best characters I have come across. As he bumps through his life, he drags you with him.

His relationships with Mariana Pia Pelligrino, his parents, and the Monseigneur are compelling.

When Petey Pat dies for nine minutes and has a NDE (near death experience), he encounters a few entertaining characters – including a God who wants everyone to know he likes laughter, his life changes.

No surprise there.

But – and here's the but – there is not a cliché moment in this book.

Its fresh, its entertaining, it made me feel good as I read.

I fell in love with this book, its characterization, its humour, its tale about life, death, love, and belief.

I'm going back to the library.

This time I won't be grabbing an Andrew M. Greeley book by mistake.

It will be deliberate.

Monica says

"Home for Christmas" is the literature version of a stew. A delicious flavorful broth, but this stew is missing the meat, the potatoes and all the vegetables. So who would make a stew with just the broth? The same question could be asked in a sense regarding this book. Who would write a book with such a great premise, moments of genius, but no substance? It was very hard to connect with the characters because of that lack of substance. The story is about Petey Pat, a soldier who has experienced a NDE or near death experience. It is also about Petey Pat's youth and his love for Mariana, a woman he left behind. It is also about Fr. Jimmy and his relation to the previous mentioned characters. It's about all of those things, and 42 more (ok maybe I'm exaggerating a bit) story lines (in 192 pages) but also about none of those things because none of the story lines were fully developed and how I wish they would have been. I didn't hate reading this story, I just wanted more. I wanted to get to know the characters more. The great ideas woven through the book were inventive and interesting to me but lacked the emotional grip that I was wanting. The author uses secondary definitions or tertiary for that matter which is stimulating to the story but uses them so sparingly that it doesn't fit with the mood or with the previous narration that was in a different tone.

Overall, decent premise, at times, decent writing (note the "at times") but lacking substance.

Liz says

Typically, I love Andrew M. Greeley's work. I love the wit and the stories he weaves. In this book, however, I didn't really feel that depth of story. It makes me wonder whether he was trying to get something written for the publisher in time for Christmas.

While still showing great signs of Greeley's wit and still an easy story to read, I was disappointed that there wasn't more plot development. Character development is sufficient for the three main characters, but the story itself seems lacking.

Still a quick read; not much focused on the holiday, however. I wouldn't consider this a holiday read. I'd be interested to see what Greeley could do with this book if he spent some time developing the plot more and the supporting characters more. I'd like to have seen us read and discover situations that were simply told.

All in all, not the best Greeley work, but a quick one--and an interesting take on near-death experiences.

Ruth Ann says

My dad recommended this to me a few years ago!

I just re-read this in preparation for a readers advisory Holiday Book Discussion program. I couldn't quite remember why this short, delightful story is one of my favorite Christmas books. There's love and romance, reality, a cover-up, war and battles, and a gracious Medal of Honor acceptance speech on pages 164-165.

This book covers Peter Patrick Kane's life from second grade on to life in the military where he is injured three times, badly enough to be awarded Purple Heart medals. His third injury sends him to a meeting with God who has a couple of things he wants Petey to accomplish. (view spoiler)

The Catholic priest who plays a role in this book is the kind of pastor we all wish our parishes could have and keep! He is full of personality, reason, deep faith and wisdom.

Cassandra says

I dropped this one 50 pages in. I just couldn't convince myself to finish it. The author jumped from POV to POV, from present to past, with very little to inform the reader what was going on. I couldn't keep up without a whole lot of work and wasn't invested enough in the story to even try.

Mallory says

My first Andrew Greeley book. Not a terrible story, I just really couldn't get into the writing style. Part Iraq War indictment, part love story, part mystical experience, a lot of Catholicism - a little too much going on in such a short book. And not MUCH to do with Christmas at all.
