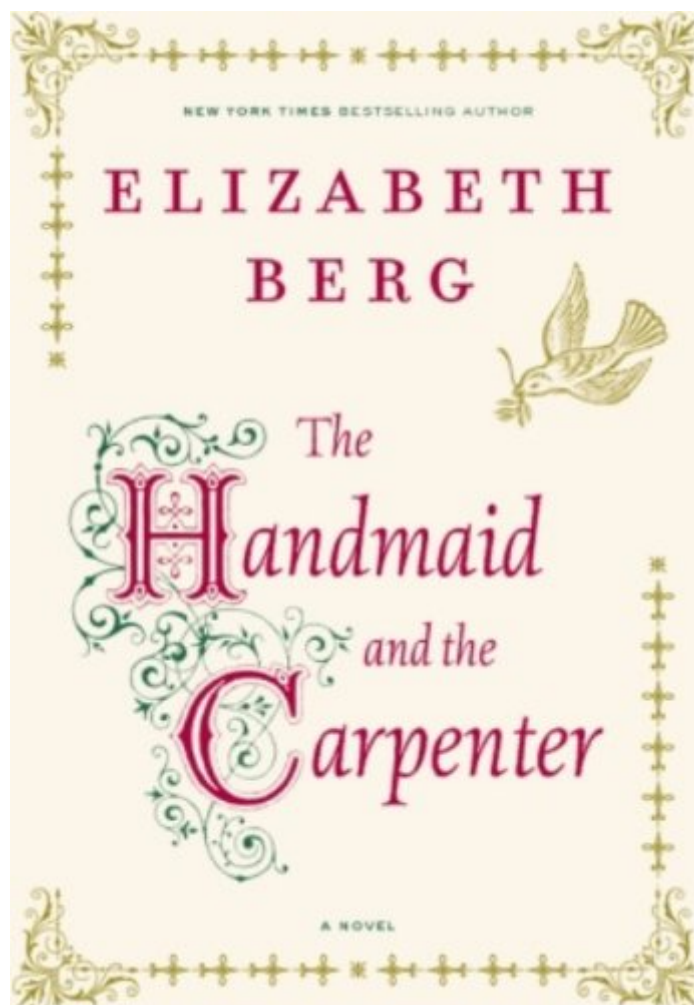


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The Handmaid And The Carpenter: A Novel



Synopsis

In this wonderful novel about love and trust, hope and belief, Elizabeth Berg, the bestselling author of *We Are All Welcome Here* and *The Year of Pleasures*, transports us to Nazareth in biblical times to reimagine the events of the classic Christmas story. We see Mary “young, strong, and inquisitive” as she first meets Joseph, a serious-minded young carpenter who is steadfastly devoted to the religious traditions of their people. The two become betrothed, but are soon faced with an unexpected pregnancy. Aided by a great and abiding love, they endure challenges to their relationship as well as threats to their lives as they come to terms with the mysterious circumstances surrounding the birth of their child, Jesus. For Mary, the pregnancy is a divine miracle and a privilege. For Joseph, it is an ongoing test not only of his courage but of his faith “in his wife as well as in his God. Exquisitely written and imbued with the truthful emotions and richness of detail that have earned Elizabeth Berg a devoted readership, *The Handmaid and the Carpenter* explores lives touched profoundly by miracles large and small. This powerful and moving novel is destined to become a classic.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

I wasn't thrilled when my Catholic women's book club chose this for our December selection. After reading the reviews here I was afraid the book would be polarizing. It wasn't, the book stimulated a wonderful lively discussion. I am glad we read it and recommend it. Berg tells us up front that this is her imagining of the events that took place in what we know as the Christmas story. She acknowledges she has taken license with the "varying and contradictory facts". The reader isn't required to accept Berg's imagining as the reader's own. But Berg's book will stimulate the reader's own imagining of the story. Berg's telling made me think and for that I am glad. I enjoyed Berg's rich vision of Mary and Joseph as they may have lived in Palestine 2000 years ago. It made me think about the foods they ate, the house they lived in, the work they did, the life lived by two human beings who lived and walked the earth. It made me think anew about what the birth of Jesus would have been like for these two people, their families and friends. And finally Berg's telling made me think about what I believe and why I believe what I believe.

This delightful, short book, which is perfect for Advent reading, tells the story of Mary and Joseph in a way you've never before read. Author Elizabeth Berg uses the Gospels as the foundation of the story, but then she fleshes it out in novel form to make these ancient biblical characters come to life as real people. She shows their humanity, exploring the myriad of feelings and emotions Mary and Joseph must have felt with the miracle birth of Jesus. A lovely story.

In standing with Elizabeth Berg being my favorite writer, she stood up to my expectations on this book. I got it for Christmas in 2006 and waited until 2007 to read it, but I thought it started out slow, so I put it aside. Now a few years later, I have converted my religion, but still decided to give the book a shot. It didn't even speak to me as a religious book, because it's not really. It's only the authors take on what she thinks happened -- all the day to day things that you don't get to see in the story of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. I just loved it. I read it as an awesome story with a great plot, and was not at all put off by the story that it was representing. This book is a quick read (as are most of Elizabeth Berg's books because you just can't put them down), and I just loved it. There were so many ways she could have gone into more detail and made the book longer, but I think the way it is is just fine.

Elizabeth Berg's *The Handmaid and the Carpenter: A Novel* is a richly detailed saga of an historic time and a Biblical couple; it is a tale that she has imbued with her special skill of immediacy and an everyday voice, and as a result, we can visualize this young couple as they struggle with the effects of a miraculous conception on their relationship and their lives. We follow them in their journey to Bethlehem and the events that unfold there, just as we come to see the other small and large miracles that accompany them throughout their lives together. And we watch as Joseph's doubts rise up again, and how, finally, he comes to believe. This brief and powerful account is memorable and evocative, and one which adds another dimension to Berg's body of work. Five stars!

Elizabeth Berg is one of my favorite authors. She really knows how to bring the characters in all of her books alive. The same is true here. Realizing that this is FICTION, helped me to overlook some of the behaviors displayed (sexual undertones). I loved the fun loving personality of both Mary and Joseph in their youth. This story stayed with me for a long time after I finished the book. I would not call this a "novel." It was more of a short story. Personally, I loved it!

I enjoyed this story. The love story between Mary and Joseph was beautifully depicted and I love the way they were presented as human beings and not perfect. My only two problems with this book were that it was too short and there was no character development. Mary and Joseph were chosen for the faith they displayed. Mary was discontented throughout most of the book and Joseph never believed Mary at all. That was a little disappointing but I think the author was just trying to depict the very human doubts and fears they must have had. Just don't read the story expecting some great revelation on the part of the characters.

I would not recommend this historical novel. Very uninspiring.

Great read! Made me really think of Mary and Joseph as individual people going through very challenging lives.

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