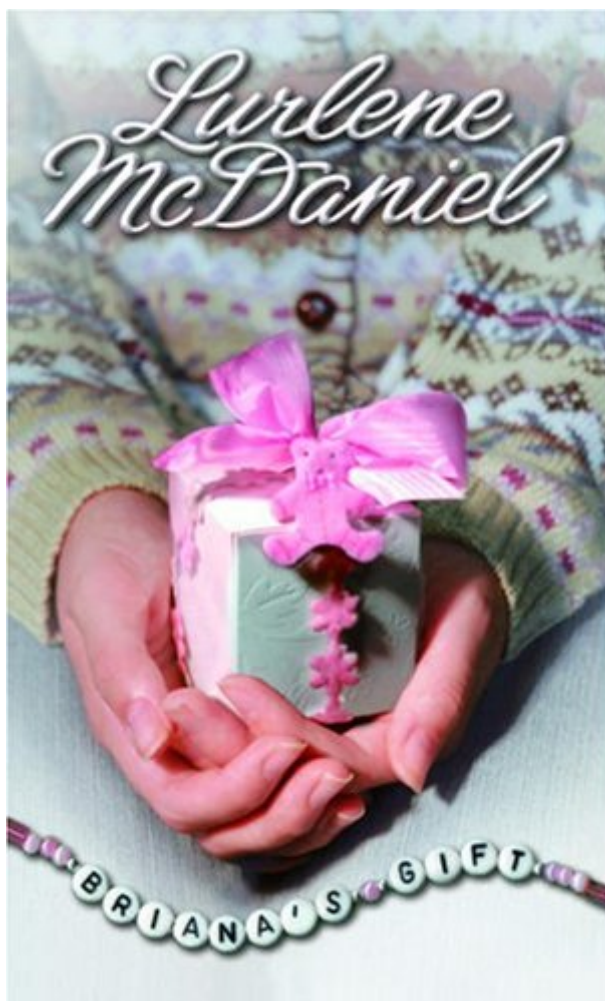


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Briana's Gift (Lurlene McDaniel (Mass Market))



Synopsis

Thirteen-year-old Casey's mother always said that Casey's sixteen-year-old sister marched to the beat of a different drummer. But it isn't until Briana runs away with an older boy that Casey begins to understand what her mother meant. When Briana returns home alone and pregnant, Casey and her mother try to help Briana come to terms with her options. It was already complicated to think about Briana's choices and then things change suddenly again. When Briana is in a serious accident, Casey's mother sees things one way. Although Casey understands her mother's reaction, she feels she must try to convince her mother to make a different decision. Casey needs to grow up fast and do what she can to maintain Briana's legacy. Will she be able to make her mother understand that there is only one way to accept Briana's gift? From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In *Briana's Gift*, 17-year-old Briana runs away from home and returns alone and pregnant. Suddenly, Briana dies of a freak brain aneurysm and leaves her family to choose what will

become of the unborn baby. Improbabilities aside, this could have been an interesting, emotionally touching premise. Unfortunately, this book was ridiculous. I've never read anything else by Lurlene McDaniel, but she's my coworker's favorite author, and she lent me this book because I liked *The Fault in Our Stars* and *The Probability of Miracles* (apparently I'm known for liking books about teenagers dying. Oops). I read it to the end, hoping something would redeem it, but no. The writing was awful. It was simplistic, filled with unnecessary flowery descriptions of random things, and the narrator kept switching voices annoyingly. The characters were cardboard and just irritatingly stupid. If they had said "down at the Wal-mart one more time I was going to pull my hair out. And the plot was laughable. Don't even get me started on the could-not-be-more-cliched scene where the main character suddenly realizes out of nowhere that she loves her friend and "drowns in his good-looking blue eyes". Don't worry, after about twenty pages of barf about how hot his jeans were and a little lusting over him instead of, you know, paying attention at her sister's funeral, she just as quickly decides she doesn't care that her best friend is dating him. What? I really wanted to care about this family who lost a daughter/sister and had to take care of her child, but because the whole thing was so asinine, it was impossible for me. This premise could have been beautiful, about sisterly love and loss. As it stands, I would not recommend this book at all.

First off let me say that this really wasn't my favourite book by Lurlene McDaniel at all but I did like it. I liked it because this book while not being her strongest work in my opinion it is written in the usual way most of her older books were written in being from a first person point of view. I liked Sissy though I hated her name but I found her mother to be an irritating woman who just because her one teenage daughter (Briana) got pregnant it was as if she had forgotten that she even had another child. At times I was very angry at her mother for shoving Sissy aside because Sissy's world was just as affected by the news of Briana's pregnancy as anyone but she was being the mature one while the mother was just acting out much like a small child. When Briana comes home and starts straightening her life out she gets a job at the local wal-mart and one day suffers from an aneurysm. She ended up becoming brain damaged and all their mother could think of was giving the unborn baby away as soon as she was born. Sissy wasn't taken into account and her mother would not even allow her to put up a Christmas tree that year because she was too caught up in her suffering to see that her daughter was hurting too. Now Sissy is the advocate for keeping her sister's baby she

out right refuses to allow her mother to give her niece away. And boy does she fight. I love how much strength that Sissy had and how she didn't give up. My favourite part in the book was the end where her mother and her take her niece home from the hospital and the neighbors offer to help them with raising the baby since her mother has arthritis. It was very touching that their small town community offered their time to help raise the appropriately named baby, Noel.

Thirteen-year-old Susanna (Sissy to her family) hasn't had much luck with the month of December. When she was six, her dad died in a horrible accident at work. At eight, her mother was diagnosed with a debilitating arthritis. And most recently, her spirited older sister, Briana, decides to run off to Los Angeles with her boyfriend. So this year's December also will be a depressing one. Briana sends postcards at first, but all too soon there's no word at all. Sissy depends on her best friends, Melody and Stu, to help her through the lonely days of missing her sister, and practicing her flute passes the time as well. Somehow life goes on. Then, just before school starts the following year, a pregnant Briana shows up at the front door asking to come home. Briana's boyfriend, who she's better off without, is long gone; she absolutely refuses to track him down for child support. Briana is determined to make a good life for her baby and soon gets a cashier job at Wal-Mart, saving up for everything her baby will need. Sissy is so ecstatic that her sister is home, and she's really looking forward to becoming an aunt. Her relationship with Briana has grown some as well. Instead of tagging around after Briana, admiring Briana from her little sister status, they are more like friends, pouring over baby books and following the baby's progress together. Sissy even volunteers to redecorate the new nursery, painting the walls lilac with green trim, and she loves to play her flute for the unborn baby. But without warning, Briana falls deathly ill, and Sissy and her mom are faced with some impossible decisions. To make life more complicated and confusing, Sissy's friendships with Melody and Stu are changing; Melody seems distant, and Sissy starts seeing Stu differently, in a "guy-type" way. She wishes that their friendship could return to normal, but deep down she knows it will never be the same. This year's December approaches with even more sadness and despair than ever --- and with one of the greatest gifts ever offered. Lurlene McDaniel has written quite a few novels for young people, including The Angels in Pink trilogy and LETTING GO OF LISA. As with her previous stories, BRIANA'S GIFT centers on serious life-changing events that really hit the heart hard. McDaniel's characters are as life-like as her plots, and her storylines keep the pages turning. Another winner from this talented author! --- Reviewed by Chris Shanley-Dillman, author of FINDING MY LIGHT and THE BLACK POND.

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