



The Light of Paris

Eleanor Brown

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The miraculous new novel from *New York Times*–bestselling author Eleanor Brown, whose debut, *The Weird Sisters*, was a sensation beloved by critics and readers alike.

Madeleine is trapped—by her family's expectations, by her controlling husband, and by her own fears—in an unhappy marriage and a life she never wanted. From the outside, it looks like she has everything, but on the inside, she fears she has nothing that matters.

In Madeleine's memories, her grandmother Margie is the kind of woman she should have been—elegant, reserved, perfect. But when Madeleine finds a diary detailing Margie's bold, romantic trip to Jazz Age Paris, she meets the grandmother she never knew: a dreamer who defied her strict, staid family and spent an exhilarating summer writing in cafés, living on her own, and falling for a charismatic artist.

Despite her unhappiness, when Madeleine's marriage is threatened, she panics, escaping to her hometown and staying with her critical, disapproving mother. In that unlikely place, shaken by the revelation of a long-hidden family secret and inspired by her grandmother's bravery, Madeleine creates her own Parisian summer—reconnecting to her love of painting, cultivating a vibrant circle of creative friends, and finding a kindred spirit in a down-to-earth chef who reminds her to feed both her body and her heart.

Margie and Madeleine's stories intertwine to explore the joys and risks of living life on our own terms, of defying the rules that hold us back from our dreams, and of becoming the people we are meant to be.

The Light of Paris Details

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From Reader Review **The Light of Paris** for online ebook

Barbara says

It was perfect that I read this book as I set off on vacation in July. My trip was ending with a 3 day stay in Paris. My first time visiting. I must say, I really enjoyed the dual time line of this book. Madeleine in present day and Margie in Jazz Age Paris. Madeleine is unhappy in her marriage, but feels stuck, not sure what she wants to do. After a nasty argument with her controlling husband, Madeleine escapes to her childhood home, but she and her mother have never had the best relationship, so she may have gone from the frying pan into the fire! Madeleine's mother is selling the family home to move to a senior living community and she gets stuck helping with the packing and sorting of years of family junk and heirlooms. During the packing she finds an old diary belong to her grandmother Margie and is shocked to find out how her grandmother was skirting convention and living life to the fullest during an age of discovery. Margie was trying to become a writer, hanging out in cafes and salons with artists and bohemians of the day. Madeleine is captivated by Margie's zest for life, but wonders what happened to the irrepressible girl, since Madeleine's mother had always said her mother was someone who always followed societal rules. While learning more of Margie's Paris life, Madeleine has her own summer of discovery, getting back to her artistic roots and maybe finding love along the way. This was a delightfully told story. The author's website had lots of great added information about the sites mentioned in Paris. I did tour the Ritz Hotel while I was in Paris and could certainly imagine Margie there.

Dara says

Just ok. The story didn't stand out for me. A woman finds her grandmother's journals packed away in the attic and discovers that she was once a very different woman than the one she'd known. Who hasn't read that before?

A love story in Paris during the Jazz Age ...of course I was drawn to that! But I found the main character of modern day, Madeline, to be almost pathetic at times. She is "trapped" in her rich girl, loveless, and controlling marriage. Her mother's disapproval & her acceptance of it seems outdated & unbelievable. In the author's attempt to make her appear in sync with her 1920's counterpart, Margie her grandmother, she instead looked like she was plucked from that time and just dropped into 1999. Maybe 1959 would've been more believable. I almost expected a description of her outfit to contain a corset because that's how outdated her traits & interactions appeared. Her relationships are complete emotional abuse. Still, her internal talk is simply annoying. "What will I do?, who will I be? No one will marry me, I can't eat cake or someone will say I'm fat.." Can you sense my eye rolls? Neither female character seemed to think much of herself so it was difficult to connect. My overall feeling toward them was frustration.

The setting and story itself, although nothing new, kept me reading. But it is a tired storyline, with only moderately interesting characters with what I consider questionable likability.

Arlene says

I was so excited to be offered a copy of **The Light of Paris** by Eleanor Brown. Any story that transports me to that lovely city is one I'm always eager to dive into. Having never been and journeying with these characters as Margie had the experience of a life time makes me long to visit one day! Eleanor Brown truly

knows how to catapult her readers into her story and have them feel like they are traveling right alongside her characters.

In this story, Madeleine finds herself in a marriage that wasn't quite what she envisioned for herself. It's a loveless connection to say the least, but she's also sacrificed quite a bit to accommodate her family's expectations. Madeleine has given up the things she loved the most, especially expressing herself through painting. So when she travels to her hometown to visit her mother, she comes across her grandmother's journals that have her connecting with Margie in a way that awakens her desire to live according to her own terms once again. Margie is a character that took a risk during a time that women had minimal say in how their lives turned out, but a few months in Paris showed her that independence and chasing your dream is more important than any expectation society can place on a girl.

I really enjoyed getting to know Margie and Madeleine. There were moments in the beginning of the novel that I longed for stronger characters, but it was quickly made clear that **The Light of Paris** is a story about self-discovery and growth, which ultimately happened for these two ladies. Seeing their steady transformation as the novel progressed was both rewarding and gratifying.

Reading about the cafes, theatres, libraries and people of Paris was absolutely magical. Eleanor Brown did an amazing job of making Margie's journey come to life. I often felt like I was strolling the streets of Paris right alongside this amazing character.

Overall, **The Light of Paris** is a story that is filled with commendable characters and memorable moments, all alongside a backdrop of the perfect city. What I wouldn't give for a season in Paris! Lovely!!

Lisa says

I can't stop thinking about this book. It is exquisitely written with so many layers. I read the first 6 pages about a dozen times because it was so beautiful. It is the story of two women in different times, Margie in 1920s Paris and her granddaughter Madeleine. Both are unhappy until they find the courage to change their lives. It's about coming to terms with who you are and accepting yourself. I can't wait until this book is out July 12, 2016. It will reach into your soul.

Karen says

Whiny. Insipid. Unreadable.

Amanda says

Originally posted on Desert Island Book Reviews

The Light of Paris alternates between two stories: Madeleine's story set in the southern U.S. in 1999 and her grandmother Margie's story set primarily in Jazz-Age Paris. Each woman must figure out living the life that makes her happiest while balancing the expectations of their families and society.

It's hard to write a real synopsis of this story without giving too much away, but basically it's half women's fiction and half historical fiction, with each chapter alternating between Madeleine and Margie. I really enjoyed reading this and am so glad I was able to get to it so quickly!

Madeleine is a mid-thirties reluctant housewife who robotically does what's expected of her, even though it's killing her on the inside. This isn't the Madeleine we see most of the time, though, because when she's away from her husband (who seems totally awful, by the way), she's a completely different person. I think there's something in Madeleine that we can all sympathize with and relate to.

Margie's story is told through her diaries, but sort of. It's kind of like Madeleine narrating her grandmother's diaries, which was my least favorite part of the way this story was told. Personally, I would have preferred for Madeleine to keep to her own chapters and to have Margie's personality shine through instead, especially since her story came from journals she wrote. I could have read a full book about Margie and wished I could have seen more of her.

I'm obsessed with all things Parisian, and I loved reading about Margie's life in Paris, even if she wasn't there for a long time. Someday, hopefully I'll be able to spend months in Paris. I'm convinced that's the only way you can really experience the city, and it seems like Margie would have agreed with me. In Madeleine's words, Margie "had fallen hopelessly in love with Paris," and I totally understand the feeling.

The characters throughout this book are interesting and real. I enjoyed seeing them change and seeing their relationships with and perceptions of each other evolve. I was especially happy to see Madeleine's relationship with her mother shift to something more mature.

This book had two great stories and I really loved how they came together. I gave this book four stars because I loved the story, but I wished Margie's story had gotten more time and that Madeleine hadn't been interjected into Margie's chapters.

*ARC from NetGalley

Christina (Confessions of a Book Addict) says

Madeleine is stuck in a loveless marriage with a controlling husband. She finds herself to be not only unhappy, but she no longer paints, which is the thing that she loves the most in life. Her husband controls every aspect of her life and the worst part about it is the fact that she lets him. She escapes for a few days to her hometown to visit her mother and she comes across her grandmother's old journals. Her grandmother was a very elegant woman, the very opposite of Madeleine, but that wasn't always the case. As Madeleine reads more of her grandmother's journals, she comes to realize that her grandmother, Margie, is an unconventional woman and spent a few months living in Paris during the 20s. Margie ends up inspiring Madeleine to branch out and actually start living her life regardless of what her husband or judge-y mother thinks. *The Light of Paris* is a multi-generational tale about two women who learn that life is too short to try to please everyone. Margie and Madeleine learn that the time is now to start living and where better to do that than in Paris?

Read the rest of my review here:

<http://www.confessionsofabookaddict.c...>

Jennifer says

25% of the way in and sadly, I'm doing to DNF this one.

I remember thoroughly enjoying *The Weird Sisters* and recall it was a smart, well-written book. Unfortunately this book is very different. It's told in two parts -- a 1924 story of Margie and a 1999 story of Madeleine. Margie's story is written in what I can only describe as "YA style" and Madeleine's story is a "beach read" at best.

Other reviewers are enjoying this and giving it high marks, so I would encourage readers to seek out reviews other than mine if you're considering this book. I am just not the right audience for this book, though I do recommend *The Weird Sisters*.

I'm not assigning stars because I didn't finish the book.

Thank you to NetGalley and G.P. Putnam's Sons for a galley of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Renee Rosen says

While very different from her debut *THE WEIRD SISTERS*, Eleanor Brown does not disappoint in her new novel. This story of a granddaughter and grandmother, sweeping back and forth between two time periods is so skillfully handled, the author knows exactly what she's doing and the reader is delighted to keep turning the pages. The writing is beautiful, the characters vivid, the story compelling. I can't wait to see what Brown writes next!

Carol Brill says

Here's my review of *The Light of Paris* for New York Journal of Books
<http://www.nyjournalofbooks.com/book-...>

Denise says

Eleanor Brown was inspired to write this novel after reading letters that belonged to her own grandmother. *The Light of Paris* is a dual time novel: Madeleine in the 1990's and Margie (Marguerite) in the 1920's. Both women want desperately to live their own lives, not the life prescribed by their families. I especially enjoyed Margie's life in Paris, even though it was only a few months. (KUYH February 2017 Travel challenge).

"Never be caught without something to read." Madeleine's section

"Dreams are the only place where the mind is truly honest. In our dreams we can find all our unexpressed desires, and collective wisdom." Margie's section

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

It had Paris in the title and an Eiffel Tower on the cover...I'm helpless in the face of these things to stop myself from nabbing this book.

It didn't take long for me to realize that this book was going to be a disappointment. Both of the main characters, 1999-era Madeleine and her grandmother Margie, disparage themselves and undermine themselves and allow themselves to be manipulated and make bad decisions in order to go along with others. These ladies don't even like themselves; how could the reader possibly like them? The plot is pat, too; Margie needs a place to stay and a place to stay appears, and Margie needs a job and a job appears. Sadly, Paris in the title and an Eiffel Tower on the cover isn't enough.

Judy Collins says

Inspired by a grandmother's time in Paris, *Eleanor Brown (Weird Sisters)* eloquently transports readers in **THE LIGHT OF PARIS** -two generations of women-being true to oneself, a journey of self-discovery. Grabbing life and joy. Freedom. *Having the heart and courage to be who we really are.*

The audiobook, narrated by *Cassandra Campbell* (one of my favorite narrators), delivered an award-winning performance, a perfect voice for three generations of women. From food, art, culture, gardens, creativity, writing, romance, travel—ah, Paris, Awe-inspiring!

Two stories separated by time and space —1999, when Madeleine, a thirty-something, drifting, unhappily married Chicago woman, visits her aging, perfectionist mother in their small Southern hometown.

She discovers in an attic, the journals of her (secretive life) grandmother, Margie, who spent time in 1924 Paris Jazz Age—a world of freedom, art, and love- which changed her life. *What happened to this life, the dreams, aspirations?*

This is the life, Madeleine longs for. She never knew this grandmother. Madeleine and Maggie are very similar in many ways. Both generations have demands from family and told to put dreams aside. Obligations. They both did the same—things they swore they would not do. *Learning from the past.*

Present day: Madeline is miserable in her life. A controlling mother, who has pushed society, marriage, outward appearances, and traditions. Never a thought to one's own desires.

Following in the steps of her mother, in a loveless marriage to Phillip—she finally has enough with her controlling husband. She never should have married him. She loves to paint and wants to explore things which she has put aside, to be someone else. Someone else's expectations. *Does she have to courage to do the unexpected?*

Leaving her husband, she returns to her Southern hometown. She has to endure more critical negativity

from her demanding mother. Her mother is appalled. No one divorced.

However, a light of hope. She discovers an old trunk in her mom's attic, and is surprised by a grandmother's secret past.

Her grandmother, Margie spent time in Paris, writing, a man, an artist, creativity, the dreams. Where did it all go wrong? Why was she not told about her grandmother's past? How did her own mother come to be the way she is today?

Reading her grandmother's journals was like reading her own thoughts. She wanted to connect with her and felt something was unfinished. She couldn't explain why she never felt like she belonged. Could she possibly finish the life for her grandmother? *Going abroad by herself signified a bravery she had not considered she possessed.*

Can Madeline find her own way? Away from social pedigrees? To dance, eat, travel, laugh, and paint. The what if? *Closing your eyes and taking a step off a cliff. Risk versus security.*

The promise of Paris and a future to own. Surrounded by people, food, art, friends, community. The possibilities. The unknown.

Thought-provoking: How do choices we make reverberate through generations? How are we influenced by those outside forces? Are children pawns in an endless chess game? Raised with expectations. Why do some siblings break free; while others continue along the same path as previous generations? Giving up happiness.

Carving out a space, a niche -finding the things that are important in life, rather than things forced upon us--from demands, duty, responsibility, money, family and society. Trying to live up to something others want. Expectations. Reality. *Can you live your dream?*

"A mother's words, were a grandmother's legacy of disappointment. The best a granddaughter can do is live in a way to possibly break the cycle."

A beautifully written story about the expectations people have for one another. In the process one woman discovers a critical bit of information about her own mother, changing everything she knew about her own *mother-daughter relationship.*

From Parisian delights, you will be ravenous rushing out for a French baguette, brie, wine Crème brûlée, and fresh berries, while booking a flight to Paris!

JDCMustReadBooks

Suzanne Leopold says

When you read this book you are reading about two women, one in the present and the other in the past. Madeleine is in her thirties in 1999 and her grandmother Margie is in her twenties in 1920. Despite living in different generations many of their issues are similar. One is trapped in a loveless marriage the other by unrealistic parental expectations.

What I liked about the book was that the chapters alternated between the two stories and two different time periods. Even though the two characters lived their lives fifty years apart, their issues were the same. The book had a nice flow to it, and I was sad when it ended. It would probably be a great book for a book club to discuss.

<https://suzyapproved.wordpress.com>
www.facebook.com/suzyapproved

****I am currently giving away a copy on my blog...

Julie says

4.5/5 I loved how Madeleine who always felt that she didn't belong in her family, found out in the end that perhaps her dreams follow her maternal grandmother more than she knew.

I loved seeing Paris from Margie's fresh eyes and how she was able to find herself there. Unfortunately for her and that time period, there wasn't much for her to come back to but marriage and obligation.

Madeleine had always struggled to find her place in the world and so she did what her parents wanted her to do, settled down. So she acquiesces and marries an upstanding but cold man. Marital issues cause her to flee back to Magnolia where she finds herself wanting all the things that she dismissed years ago.

Ms. Brown always writes so vividly and I loved experience Paris through her words. Anytime I can be transported to another era and city, it's been time well spent.

Elizabeth says

I loved this book!

Olivia Gaughan says

If I could I would rate this book a 4.5/5! I loved reading about art and Paris, and I liked reading about how life was like in 1924 compared to life in 1999. Brown did an excellent job creating/crafting the characters and describing the different lifestyles between the grandmother and granddaughter! This novel reminds me to make sure I live the life I want to and to chase my dreams!

Rebecca says

Really wanted to love this book as I loved her "Weird Sisters," but finally, bitterly, reluctantly gave up on this repetitive whinefest of upper-class women claiming to be trapped by their lives, their mommies, and their societies' expectations. The trope of "my mother doesn't love me"/"I don't look right"/"my life traps me" kept coming up so often--nearly word for word--that it felt like each chapter was reintroducing itself. Oh--and, brace yourself: apparently adolescence and high school can be a challenging time! I kept listening and waiting for something unique, interesting, self-aware, or funny, but when I realized I was yelling, "Enough with the whining!" I decided to give up.

MIGHT get the hard copy (from the library!) and speed-read it to find out if the two women get backbones in their different eras and if Brown's wit and insight resurface, but I'm not forcing myself to listen to the whole pity party aloud!

Yodamom says

Imagine how our lives would have turned out if we hadn't been afraid. I loved Sebastian, and Henry these men both sexy, and alive with dreams and happiness. The women, three generations, all suffering from making choices based on fear and peoples judgement. Finally one of them has broken the pattern and becoming who she could be.

This a multiple generational story about love, adventure, obligations, control, sacrifice, broken dreams, conformity and finally happiness. Freedom, has it's price, and a good life is worth it.

I struggled in the beginning, almost dropping it early on. It was depressing, with a sad character, but then it started changing. The message is good, the stories are lovely and full of lessons on living.

Anne says

One of the best ways for any author or publisher to tempt me with a book is to mention that it's a dual-time narrative and that one of the eras is the 1920s (or the 1960s, I adore them both!). When I read the blurb about *The Light of Paris* and saw mention of 1920s Jazz Age Paris, I knew that this was a story for me.

The Light of Paris is an absolute joy to read. Eleanor Brown's two lead characters, Madeleine and Margie are separated by seventy years, yet they have so many things in common. Madeleine's life is coming unstuck and she's found herself staying with her mother in her old bedroom, in her childhood home, surrounded by people who've known her for a lifetime.

When Madeleine discovers her grandmother Margie's diary, she is transfixed and discovers things about her, and her family that she had no idea about.

Margie's story seems to spur Madeleine along, and it's not long before she is a permanent resident of the small Southern town, leaving her controlling husband far behind. She then discovers more of Margie's life ... and secrets.

The compare and contrast between these two women is done incredibly well, and it is clear that in parts of

society, attitudes towards those women who don't quite fit the mould. are just as strong now as they were in the 1920s.

Whilst I enjoyed the 1990s setting and the at times, hateful people who inhabit Madeleine's home town, I was absolutely smitten by Margie's time in Jazz Age Paris. She lived alone, she danced, she loved, she discovered things that she'd never imagined and certainly would never have seen if she hadn't travelled to Europe. Her time there was short, but Eleanor Brown vividly and brilliantly brought the city to life and the reader experiences Margie's joy alongside her.

This is an easy-to-read and thoughtful story that I enjoyed very much. The author deals with the hugest of choices and how those can affect the generations that come afterwards. Delicate and gentle with big-hearted characters with an incredible sense of place, this is a beautiful summer read.

<http://randomthingsthroughmyletterbox...>
