

## The Frayed Ribbon

**R.W. Hart**

iUniverse (Dec 11, 2015)

Softcover \$14.95 (202pp)

978-1-4917-8429-7

*This story will give emotional depth to the complicated legal process of adoption.*

R. W. Hart's *The Frayed Ribbon* is a feel-good story about a seemingly happily married woman whose childhood adoption leads to feelings of angst.

During a troubled pregnancy, Gail Rollins is hospitalized for bed rest. While she is there, a disaster occurs in her city and a frightened young girl, Lexie, becomes a patient. She is brought to Gail's room, and Gail befriends her. Despite promising to keep in touch when Gail is discharged, she loses track of Lexie. For the next two decades, Gail is burdened with guilt for not keeping in touch.

Reconnection with Lexie drives the story, but other topics operate at a deeper level. Encountering Lexie in the hospital subconsciously sparked an effort by Gail to delve into her own adoption history and then begin a search for her own birth mother. That's implied, but given the time frame of the rest of the novel—a holiday gathering years later—there are more references to Gail's extended family and their internal relationships rather than to Lexie. Missing is a narrative thread about Lexie's life as she matured, especially since there was trauma early in her life.

Rather than a traditional narrative arc, the novel is composed of two anecdotes—Gail and Lexie's time in the hospital and Gail's family gathering—linked together. Gail herself is not shown to have been changed much by the intervening years; she is essentially the same person who met Lexie. Gail's family members are shown to have distinct personalities, and are a realistic and diverse bunch. Lexie seems most real and believable in the earlier portion of the story when she's a vulnerable child ripped from her parents and isolated in a hospital. Anyone who experienced hospitalization as a child will feel empathy.

The novel's dialogue is realistic and is the primary means of defining and explaining the characters of Gail and her family. The setting, though, is unclear. Establishing a place, even fictional, and using that location to give color to the novel, or to expand the life of characters, would enhance reading pleasure.

*The Frayed Ribbon* will appeal to those who have been adopted, or have adopted, or are participating in foster care. It's a book that will give emotional depth to a complicated legal process.

GARY PRESLEY (May 25, 2016)

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