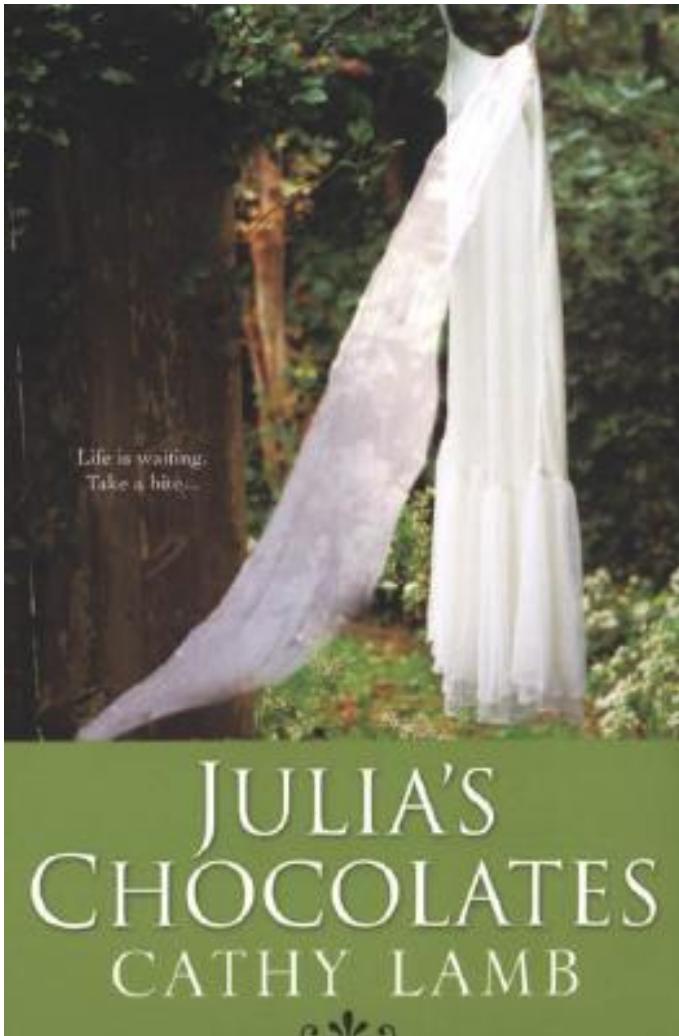

Cathy Lamb

Julia's Chocolates



Title: Julia's Chocolates

Author: Cathy Lamb

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Description

"I left my wedding dress hanging in a tree somewhere in North Dakota. I don't know why that particular tree appealed to me. Perhaps it was because it looked as if it had given up and died years ago and was still standing because it didn't know what else to do..."

In her deliciously funny, heartfelt, and moving debut, Cathy Lamb introduces some of the most wonderfully eccentric women since *The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood* and *The Secret Life of Bees*, as she explores the many ways we find the road home.

From the moment Julia Bennett leaves her abusive Boston fiancé at the altar and her ugly wedding dress hanging from a tree in North Dakota, she knows she's driving away from the old Julia, but what she's driving toward is as messy and undefined as her own wounded soul. The old Julia dug her way out of a tortured, trailer park childhood with a monster of a mother. The new Julia will be found at her Aunt Lydia's rambling, hundred-year-old farmhouse outside Golden, Oregon.

There, among uppity chickens and toilet bowl planters, Julia is welcomed by an eccentric, warm, and often wise clan of women, including a psychic, a minister's unhappy wife, an abused mother of four, and Aunt Lydia herself--a woman who is as fierce and independent as they come. Meeting once a week for drinks and the baring of souls, it becomes clear that every woman holds secrets that keep her from happiness. But what will it take for them to brave becoming their true selves? For Julia, it's chocolate. All her life, baking has been her therapy and her refuge, a way to heal wounds and make friends. Nobody anywhere makes chocolates as good as Julia's, and now, chocolate just might change her life--and bring her love when she least expects it. But it can't keep her safe. As Julia gradually opens her heart to new life, new friendships, and a new man, the past is catching up to her. And this time, she will not be able to run but will have to face it head on.

Filled with warmth, love, and truth, *Julia's Chocolates* is an unforgettable novel of hope and healing that explores the hurts we keep deep in our hearts, the love that liberates us, the courage that defines us, and the chocolate that just might take us there.

Insightful reviews

Britany: The opening line of this book was the best thing about the whole thing. "I left my wedding dress hanging in a tree somewhere in North Dakota..."

Julia Bennett runs away on her wedding day from an abusive relationship, into her aunt Lydia's kooky world of giant pigs, farm life, and weekly psychic nights with Lydia's friends. Riddled with many issues, abuse, child neglect, communication, cancer, trust, alcoholism, and mostly figuring out that love completes even the most broken individuals.

For me, I just didn't connect with the characters as much as I wanted to, even though there were many deep issues going on I didn't feel vested to the stories.

Wendy: I really enjoyed this book! There were times in the beginning of the book that I laughed out loud (especially at their variously named Psychic nights).

Julia runs away from her society marriage at the last moment throwing her hated wedding dress into a tree. She goes to live with her Aunt Lydia who has always been her escape, first from her abusive and neglectful mother, and now from her abusive ex-fiance. Julia falls into small town life and into a group of women who all have their quirks and difficulties but have an underlying core of strength. Julia finally comes into her own while working at the library and caring for two kids suffering through a childhood like her own. As Julia gets ready to open herself to love, her ex arrives and throws her life into turmoil once again.

At its center, this book is about female relationships and how we support one another through all sorts of life difficulties makes me thankful for my own friends.

Amy: Julia Bennett is a single 34 yr. old woman who's having a life crisis. She had a troubled childhood growing up with an abusive mother who was a drug addict and slept around. Her mother would neglect her and also bring home boyfriends who abused Julia either physically or tried to sexually molest her. Julia used to hang out at the library or the park alot sometimes sleeping there when things got too bad and her teachers and others would pitch in and bring her meals or buy her new clothes, since her mother didn't seem to care. Her one bright spot in her life was the time she got to spend with her Aunt Lydia at her farm in Oregon most summers. Aunt Lydia tried several times to get custody of Julia but was unable to win and Julia's mom didn't want Lydia to raise her out of spite.

Now that Julia's all grown up she was involved with an abusive man of her own, he was sweet at first then started ordering her around and demanding she stop seeing her friends, belittling her weight and her looks, calling her awful nicknames and telling her he cares about her even when he's beating the living hell out of her when he's angry.

In Robert's eyes she can do nothing right, and she wouldn't go elsewhere because who would have her. She's lucky she's with him. Yeah right. So because of her past and his constant abuse, she's terrified of their coming wedding and one night she up and takes off going cross country leaving him behind and her ugly wedding dress hanging on a tree. She flees to her Aunt Lydia's and tells her the whole story.

Aunt Lydia immediately takes her in and seeing her niece's black eye and swollen battered face vows that she'll be safe in her care. She also apologizes to Julia for not doing more in the past to save her from the abuse her mother subjected her to.

Julia then meets Lydia's friends: her lover Stash, his ranch hands, and her Psychic Night pals, Katie (an abused wife with a unemployed drunken lout for a husband and mother of 4 kids), Lara (an overworked and overstressed wife of the local pastor who secretly dreams of being a successful artist), and Caroline (who is the clairvoyant who does readings for them and keeps mostly to herself preferring to live frugally), and Dean who is a successful lawyer and farm

owner who is interested in Julia from the first day they met. Each person has their own secrets as Julia finds out as she gets to know each and every one of them better, they all become really good friends and all work to help her and each other with their issues.

Julia soon gets a newspaper delivery route that takes her straight to Dean's house, so they see each other daily and they hit it off but she's scared to get too close because of her past and also she's afraid that her ex will track her down and get her. Dean is very supportive and protective of Julia and gently nudges her to be less fearful and more proactive and daring.

Julia also helps out her Aunt Lydia on her farm taking care of the animals, the pigs and chickens mostly, and makes her chocolates in her spare time for family and friends. She likes to cook and making things with chocolate seems to take her mind off her troubles and helps her heal.

Julia is also having panic attacks where her heart is racing, she gets cold and she can't breathe on occasion that stem from her abuse with Robert and her childhood as well. She thinks she's got some "dread disease" and will be dying but she tries to keep this a secret, she doesn't want to worry anyone else with this.

Having decided she needs another job, she gets a job hosting a story hour at a local library and meets two siblings, Shawn and Carrie Lynn whose home life is alot like hers was with her mom. She tries to help out, bringing them food and clothes, calling social services but they don't do anything until one night Shawn and Carrie Lynn get beat up by one of their mom's boyfriends that they end up in the hospital. Julia applies for custody of them and with Lydia, Stash, and Dean's help she gets guardianship over them so they come live with her at Lydia's.

Julia also helps Katie and her kids leave her husband and get a place of their own with the help of Stash and his men. She also helps Lara develop the courage to leave town and find herself for awhile focusing only on her art. She spends alot of time with Caroline as well getting to know her and then her Aunt Lydia gets sick with breast cancer. She leans alot on her relationship with the kids and Dean, even though she still is fearful of committing to Dean just yet. Stash takes care of Lydia and everyone helps out, till she's better.

Robert, Julia's abusive ex does come back and threatens Julia but Caroline and her friends help out to save her before something bad happens.

I loved this book....it was quirky and funny, and yet sad and inspirational at times too. Loved her Aunt Lydia....she's the best! :)

Connie: this can be my first Cathy Lamb e-book yet I see extra to come back in my future. What i assumed will be a "modern day chick book" truly had a section extra substance than I expected. It handled picture issues, abusive relationships and lots more. yet underneath all of it it used to be a narrative approximately women...their price and their friendships. usually very humorous, with a few excessive characters this ebook took me on a pleasant trip with Julia as she runs clear of her existence to determine who she rather is. 3.5 stars. no longer really four yet beautiful close.

AJ: i have heard such a lot of girls like this booklet and that i imagine that it truly is attainable that the subject material is what attracts them, however the issues of this e-book are too nice to disregard regardless of the intense and possibly optimistic message within. First of the entire in basic terms factor that may be stated in regards to the writing is that it's juvenile. this can be heavily the most poorly written books i have ever read. Cathy Lamb makes Stephanie Meyers seem like Jane Austin. I could not belly it after the 2d chapter: the flat characters, the unimaginable dialogue, the no longer even humorous or witty commentary. past that this publication is written in 2 varied individuals (the second and the 3rd, unintentionally) and the stressful retains changing, inside paragraphs!!! The editor of this publication will be fired! it is atrocious. i assume publishing ain't what it used to be. Since I paid for the booklet I saved pushing via because it used to be brief and was once rewarded for painfully cliché storylines, predictable and uninteresting plot, and the writer insulting my intelligence as a reader. YEAH, i am getting it, i am getting the chocolate metaphor, in fact, i acquired it whilst I learn the title, lady. you furthermore mght need not repeat a number of phrases, write such as you are a fifteen 12 months outdated gabbing at the phone, and really??? The Dread Disease? that is the most sensible you'll arise with? and that i bet Aunt Lydia is admittedly Shiva when you consider that she will be able to carry 2 shotguns and crack 6 eggs at once.../sigh. also each holiday starts off out with the nature explaining what she is doing now, after which retracing her steps (in a number of tenses yet i believe in third past) as a device to explain to the reader all of the info of no matter what time-frame the writer makes up as she writes. easily placed - the narration does not work. for my part it may were all in current annoying third individual yet i am not an editor; having said that it appears nor is the individual that checked this e-book sooner than it went for sale. And wouldn't it have killed the writer to perform a little little bit of learn on how chocolate is admittedly made? It's unlucky that the publication is so awful, simply because like I acknowledged above there are a few critical and critical concerns for girl to rally around.

JayeL: i admire this book. whereas the start was once a piece tough to get through, i could not positioned it down after I acquired to approximately web page 100. There are a few things approximately this publication which are disturbing. there's a lot of violence opposed to ladies and much approximately their struggles attempting to break out from it. i haven't got a lot of that experience, so it was once not easy for me to understand. Aunt Lydia stopped me in my tracks. She jogged my memory SOOO a lot of my oldest aunt that I had a troublesome time deliberating her as Lydia and never as my aunt. If my aunt had diverse opportunities, i feel she might were much more like Lydia. I came upon that this e-book had marvelous descriptions and the Cathy Lamb did an exceptional task portraying humans as they are saying what society expects them to claim whereas what they honestly are looking to say is going on of their heads. because the reader, I received either perspectives and located it to be interesting and interesting. i may additionally relate, simply because i do know that i need to claim anything than what comes out of my mouth the entire time. All of the characters are lovely quirky, which a chum and that i had a dialogue about, the crux of which was once even if the writer was once stereotyping the small city jam-packed with quirky caricatures or no matter if small cities are extra vulnerable to have quirky characters? i have not lived in a small, so i will not quite say. The worry that Julia feels and the way it impacts her relationships, regardless of Lydia, who is familiar with the tale and loves her dearly, was once a truly profound a part of the books for me. It illustrated the facility of worry for me in a truly image way. The booklet additionally exhibits the goodness of people; those that drop off eggs to these with less, those that aid a battered mom

circulation out of her house, since it is definitely the right factor to do, those that provide a person a moment probability while every person else manufacturers them as bad, those who chip in to make lifestyles a bit larger for someone. It wasn't awarded in a hokey manner. The subject matter wove its approach during the complete e-book as a part of life. One of the features of this e-book that i actually loved used to be the layering. this could be a subject matter i'm operating with straight away in a couple of parts of my life. there has been a a layer of fear, not only with Julia, yet with different characters. there has been a layer of affection and one other layer of helpfulness. there has been additionally a layer of secrets, reminding the reader that everybody has their secrets and techniques and so they preserve them for various reasons. I actually need to learn this e-book back and imagine i'll learn a few others after which return to this one.

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