

Broken Promises

By Donna M. Zadunajsky

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Reviews of Broken Promises

I just finished one of the page-turners that I love to read. BROKEN PROMISES is a very enjoyable read. I didn't want to put the book down. The author writes of characters that are very true to life... Gayle Pace

Broken Promises is a look into what it is like living with an alcoholic. You want to believe that it's the last time he will drink. You want to believe it's the last time he will cheat on you. But when is it enough? While some think Clare is weak, I found her to be pretty strong. How easy it would be to just lie there and cry? Instead, she starts her own business cleaning houses and takes care of her daughter. There were some twists towards the end that I didn't see coming...
Draaks

Broken Promises is the second fictional novel I've read and reviewed by Author Donna M. Zadunajsky. Although it is a fictional murder mystery for the most part, the majority of story line is very true to life and one that many people can identify with in one way or another.

Ofentimes, substance abuse whether alcohol or drugs, may lead to other forms of abuse. As so adeptly depicted in this novel, physical and emotional abuse usually follows toward a spouse. This inappropriate behavior is very difficult to embrace and will be the undoing of many a marriage as clearly demonstrated in "Broken Promises". This author paints a realistic and heart wrenching picture of the personal pain that is endured in this kind of living arrangement... Dolores Ayotte

It's been many years since I sat down and read a novel. This book was enjoying and easy to read. This book was interesting and eye opening to a life with an alcoholic. At different times, I found myself wanting to jump into the book and give the alcoholic an attitude adjustment, but I guess he got what was coming to him. I heard about how living with an alcoholic can be but now I feel like I lived with one reading this book. I'm so so happy that Clare found happiness...

Rodney Giel

Prologue

Present time...

I stare into the darkness. I can just make out the white walls surrounding me. I can't remember how long I have been here in this room. Some things I don't recall because of the drugs they give me, but I have memories, which haunt me most nights, and I start to lose my mind. I guess that's why I'm in this place with white walls.

I'm not allowed to have pencils or pens or anything that is sharp and could hurt someone, but they do give me crayons to draw with. I would like to think I could adjust to the life I lead now, but when I awake from my dreams, I go crazy. *Crazy*, a word I don't like to hear or use when I'm locked up in this place. This place would make anyone insane. At least that's what they tell me anyway—that I'm insane.

I hear footsteps outside my door. A door with a tiny window just above my head, so I can't see out, but they can see in. A light clicks on, the door opens, and a man in a red smock walks in carrying a tray of food for me. It's the same man I see every day, which tells me it must be morning. The people here wear different colored smocks, which I guess is, so we can determine what time it is.

"Breakfast," the man in the red smock, says each morning. I am not able to approach him or any of the people who come into my

room, or they will strap my hands and feet down onto the metal railing of the bed. I don't like them doing that, so I try to be a good girl and do as they ask.

He sets the tray on a small table in the corner of my room. It's where I eat and draw my pictures of my dreams; some are good, but most are bad. They hang them on the wall for me to look at, but they don't know what they mean to me. The people who work here tell me that the bad pictures are about the girl in my dreams — I know I was only trying to protect her, the girl in my dreams. We were once friends, so long ago in the world outside these walls.

I don't answer back when the man in the red smock talks to me. I sit and wait for him to leave, then I eat my breakfast. I have to eat the food quickly because they come back in and take away the tray if I don't. I've learned to count in my head the amount of time I have. They give me fifteen minutes to eat. I write crayon marks on the backside of my pictures for each minute. They ask me about the marks, but I don't tell them. I don't even know what day it is, much less the month or year. I guess it doesn't really matter; I'm not going anywhere.

The light clicks on and off twice to let me know that they are coming in for the tray. I quickly make my way to the bed and sit down while they take it away. A woman enters, glides over to the bed, and sits down beside me. Her blonde hair rests softly on her shoulders. I can feel her blue eyes stare through me.

“It's time for you to come with me. If you don't fight, then I won't have them stick the nasty needle in your arm that you don't like.”

I nod my head at her.

She takes me to a room that is no bigger than the one I live in. In the center of the room is a large metal table with a chair on each side. A pitcher of water with two glasses sits at the far end of the table, along with a notepad and a tape recorder.

She motions me to sit down, and I obey. She sits in front of me, then adjusts the tape recorder between us and presses the recorder button. I don't look at her; I just stare at the recorder on the table in front of me.

The woman takes out a pen from her pocket and scribbles something on the notepad. I can't read what she has written, but I honestly don't care.

“Okay, I want to go over the last matter we discussed. You said there was a story to tell me that went along with the pictures you have been drawing. Could you please start from the beginning and tell me all about it?” the woman asks.

I glance down at my hands that are strapped to the chair and swallow hard to keep down the food. Taking in a deep breath through my nose, I begin my story.

— “This girl that I have mentioned, the one that used to be my friend, it is her story. A story of a love so deep it would cut you like a knife.” I snicker before going on. “My friend's love turned into betrayal and fear.

She doesn't understand what I did for her, but I did what I had to do for my friend to be happy again and to live a life free from fear and heartache.

One

Four years earlier...

The intercom crackled as it came to life. A woman spoke cheerfully into the microphone, “Last call for flight 352 to Ft. Myers, Florida.” Clare clipped up her brunette hair and lifted Kayla onto her hip while Jim wheeled the suitcase and booster seat to the terminal.

Jim had suggested they go to Naples, Florida for Thanksgiving to see his mom and stepdad. With all the activity going on at home, Clare thought it would be a great idea to take some time away from her hectic life. She wouldn’t actually *say* their hectic life because he was the one causing it. The one thing she still had was her thinking; she could think anything she wanted, and he would never know. She often wondered what went on in his head — especially because of the *crazy* things, he did.

Shifting in her seat, Kayla held on to her mom’s arm and her teddy bear. People scampered down the aisle trying to find their seats. A couple of kids near the front of the plane started bickering about who was going to sit near the window. A tall beefy man told them to stop fighting and sit down.

The door shut to the plane and the plane lined up for take-off. This would be Kayla’s first time flying in a plane, Clare mused, and she

thought back to the doctor's appointment Kayla had a few days ago. The doctor had said it was fine for her to fly, but cautioned that Kayla's ears may hurt because of the infection she had. Clare had given Kayla her medicine before they boarded the plane, so she would be drowsy and not panic during the flight. Clare smoothed her daughter's short wavy brown hair from her eyes and sat back.

Jim reclined in his chair and closed his eyes. Clare stared out of the window looking down at the world from up in the sky. There was so much you don't see from the ground, like the outlines of the houses, fields, rivers, and the different shapes the clouds made. Everything was magnificent from up here. It had to be God's gift. Who else, or what else for that matter, could make something so beautiful and extraordinary?

Clare once dreamed about flying in the sky. She thought that if she came back after she died, through reincarnation, she wanted to be a bird. That way she could see how beautiful the world is, and everything that God had made for us to enjoy.

She closed her eyes and wondered if what she thought was normal. Thinking about her relationship with Jim and how it used to be when they first met, she remembered it wasn't this chaotic. There had been nothing but love between them, but now she couldn't even look at him like she once did. When she used to wake up in the morning, she'd slide up against him and feel the warmth of his body. They'd make passionate love over and over until their bodies expended what little energy they had left. They'd gaze into each other's eyes as Clare stroked

his face. Of course, they didn't have Kayla yet, but their old life shouldn't have changed the way they felt about each other. Many people have children and they still embrace each other with love, so what happened to them—what happened to Jim?

Ever since he lost his supervisor position at the factory where they both worked together and was given an hourly job, he'd become violent. Clare wondered what she did to make him act this way. These days she thought twice before saying anything to him. The wrong words would set him off, but it only seemed to happen when he was drinking. When he was sober, he acted as if the world was a beautiful place and no wrong ever happened.

Two hours later, the flight attendant announced that they would be landing. Kayla was sitting up, eager to get out of her seat and run around the plane. Jim opened his eyes and smiled at Clare. She smiled back. Moments like these gave her such hope that he'd get better and not hurt them anymore.

As Clare helped to gather the luggage, Kayla shouted from her stroller, "Grammy is here! Grammy is here!" Clare turned in the direction Kayla was pointing and waved when she saw Grammy who looked much younger than she'd remembered. Her hair was cut into a bob and dyed red.

Clare was surprised by how much weight Grammy had lost since she'd moved to Florida. Papa Benny stood next to her and he reminded Clare of George Carlin, the comedian, with his similar face and white hair.

Clare gave her mother-in-law and Papa Benny a hug. Within half an hour, they were entering the community where they lived. Clare stared through the window and watched the palm trees sway in the breeze. The bright blue sky was inviting, and the warm sun beamed down from above. She loved this place. It was so beautiful and breathtaking. She'd been to Florida many times as a child going to Disney World, but never this far south.

Here in Naples, the smell of salt water met her senses as she inhaled; it was paradise. The beauty of the palms and warmth that surrounded her took away all her worries and fears; and she felt as if all the pain of the past had disappeared.

Several hours after climbing into bed, Clare jolted awake when she heard the screams coming from her daughter's room. She rushed to her bed to hold her until she calmed down. After she gave Kayla her medicine, she lay down with her and stroked her hair as they both drifted off to sleep.

The morning sun shone on Clare's face, waking her as she slept on the foldout bed in the family room. Trying not to wake Kayla, she slid out from under the blankets and made her way onto the lanai where she could see the birds flying from tree to tree. At only 6:30 a.m., the sun was already making the air hot around her.

Their condo sat near a golf course. From her perch, Clare could see the workers begin mowing the grass and raking the sand pits for the golfers. She couldn't understand the concept of hitting the ball, driving, or walking to where it landed, then hitting the ball again until it dropped into the hole.

The number of people who were up at this hour surprised her. Some were walking the path along the outer perimeter of the condominiums and some were jogging or riding their bikes.

A slight breeze tousled her hair and she closed her eyes, taking in the warm air. She hadn't felt this relaxed in a long time. The sound of the glass slider rolling on its track startled Clare as Jim joined her outside. He pulled her into his arms and kissed her cheek. Clare felt butterflies in her stomach as he embraced her. They hadn't held each other like this in so long, and it felt wonderful.

"It would be so great to live here, don't you think?" Jim asked.

"Yes, it would. I could get used to waking up and feeling the warmth on my face and seeing blue skies every day. It sure would be different from Ohio."

"So, what's stopping us from doing it? Let's move. I know my mom would love to have us here, and enjoy seeing her granddaughter whenever she wanted.

"We need to tie up loose ends in Ohio, first and remember, we have to go to court. My family is there and your sister's, too. We need jobs, a place to live in, and we have Kayla to worry about."

“Just a thought,” Jim huffed. He released Clare and lit a cigarette. Clare stared out at the sky. *It would be nice to live here*, she thought.

She decided to look in the newspaper for jobs in medical claims and billing. The medical business was much better down here than up north and paid more per hour. Clare found fourteen contacts to send her resume to when she returned home. She folded the newspaper and slipped it into her purse.

They spent most of the day at the beach with Kayla playing in the sand and splashing in the water. As Clare sat on the beach watching Jim and Kayla build a sandcastle, she thought about moving down here and how much better their life might be. Jim seemed to be spending more time with them and becoming more affectionate toward Clare. He didn’t often play with Kayla at home. Maybe all her prayers were being answered and moving down to Florida is what they needed.

Returning to Grammy’s condominium, Clare realized she’d spent way too much time in the sun. Clare didn’t put as much lotion on as she did with Kayla, so her skin had burned and was tender to the touch. Jim was smart to bring a T-shirt with him, but he was more brown than red.

The week flew by and before they knew it, they were preparing to head back. Clare was surprised Papa Benny had stayed sober while they were visiting. He usually hated having company, as he was more of a loner. Grammy often told Clare what he would say to her, that he

wanted a divorce or for her to get out. Then during the next day or two he'd apologize and swear he didn't mean it.

Papa Benny, a hard-working businessman, could be sweet and caring when he wanted, especially when he wasn't drinking. He and Grammy had moved here a few years ago. It was the one place he wanted to live, but he knew he'd have to obtain a transfer from his job to do so. They both worked in nursing facilities as managers handling finances and the other responsibilities of the facility while living in the building they managed. Papa Benny wanted to move to Florida where it was warm, but he knew Grammy would have a difficult time leaving her kids who were all grown up, to move fourteen hundred miles away, but she did, and she had no regrets. At least that's what she told Clare.

Clare could tell that Papa Benny loved Grammy and would do anything for her, just as she loved and cared for him.

Jim and Clare said their goodbyes and went through security. Clare gave Kayla her medicine before they boarded the plane, hoping it would alleviate the pain in her ears. The flight home was exhausting, but Clare couldn't get the thought of moving to Florida out of her head.

She spent the next couple of days revamping her resume and faxing it. By the end of the week, she had sent fourteen faxes and received six responses. When she wrote the cover letter, she made it clear that they would be moving down in February.

The other eight weren't too happy about waiting, but Clare was ecstatic about the new adventure ahead.

Jim decided to quit his job two weeks after they got back and talked Clare into doing the same, but she wanted to wait until after going to court for the bankruptcy hearing in January before quitting. She took care of the bills and didn't want to fall short on paying them, which happened anyway because neither one could cash their 401Ks until after the court date. So, they asked Jim's dad for money and Clare assured him that he would be paid back as soon as they cashed their checks.

Christmas came, and Clare had to tell her family that they were moving to Florida. If they were unhappy, they didn't show it.

January arrived and they went to court. The bankruptcy went through, and they cashed their checks, which made Clare feel more at ease. She had paid all the bills in advance and repaid Jim's father.

They were moving to Florida. Everything that had happened in the last two years seemed like a blur. They'd lost everything—at least everything that meant something to Clare.

She sorted through the photos she'd taken of their first house together, the house that wasn't theirs any longer. They had lived with Clare's parents for a year while their house was being built. Clare had bought a six-and-a-half-acre wooded lot and had a dome house with

three bedrooms and two full baths built on it. When they were able to move in, she painted all the rooms herself and did all the decorating.

Wiping away her tears, she stuffed the pictures back into their envelope, piled more books in the box, and then sealed the box. All she remembered now was how hard she'd worked to build that house. Jim didn't have any money set aside when they met, but Clare had sold another piece of land she'd bought as well as her first car. She was the one who was paying for everything and the money was soon gone.

They'd moved three times, but she couldn't wait to move out of this townhouse. It was next door to a girl from work who she didn't get along with at work. She didn't know why the girl didn't like her, but Clare surely didn't like her sister who lived there as well. The sister whom Jim tried to have sex with one night, yet he claimed she came on to him, kissing him and touching him; which was enough to make Clare nauseated when he told her. Clare wanted to believe him, but these past two years made it hard to believe anything he said.

She finished packing in two days, though most of their belongings were in a storage unit when they moved out of the house. In four days, they were renting the moving truck and driving south to Florida.

Zeya Culback, Jim's sister, would be riding with him in the truck. Zeya hadn't seen her mom in almost a year because of a lack of money.

Grammy thought it was a wonderful idea and was thrilled with her coming to visit. Besides, Jim could use the company since Clare would be driving down in her car with Kayla.

Before going to see her parents, Clare drove to her friend Angel's house, but she knew it would be hard to say goodbye to her friend of ten years. Angel was always there for Clare to lean on when things went wrong in her life.

After pulling into the driveway, Clare parked the car and got out. Angel stood on the porch with her arms crossed in front of her. Her long blonde hair was pulled back into a ponytail. Clare couldn't remember the last time she wore it that way.

"Hi, Angel," Clare greeted her, choking back her tears. Angel opened her arms and embraced her.

"I'm going to miss you, you know. Who am I going to lean on when you're gone?" Angel asked.

"I'm going to miss you too. I wish you could come with me," Clare whispered. "I'm just a phone call away. We'll keep in touch. I promise." They held each other and cried.

"I promise too, but you're right, we'll keep in touch."

After saying their goodbyes, Clare wiped the tears streaming down her cheeks and drove away. She wasn't sure how she'd manage without Angel, but she had to learn and hold her own.

More tears surfaced when Clare hugged her mom. Saying goodbye was the hardest thing, she had to do.

“You don’t have to go, you know,” Clare’s mom whispered in her ear, which made Clare cry harder. *But* she knew she should go, she wanted to go, although Jim’s moods and the process of moving were more overwhelming than she’d anticipated. Something inside told her that everything would work out in the end. At least that’s what she’d told herself. How could it get any worse than what had happened already?

Two

Clare

The drive down didn't take as long as Clare had predicted. They made stops to eat, filled up the gas tank, and took one night to sleep. Kayla enjoyed the ride, but she mostly slept or watched a movie on the DVD player that Clare bought for her before they left.

They arrived within two days and unloaded their belongings into a storage unit, until they were able to find a place to live. In the meantime, they'd be staying with Grammy and Papa Benny.

The following morning, Clare arranged for an interview at Naples Immediate Care and was meeting the Vice President in two hours. Clare sat waiting for Wendy Burr, the Vice President of the Clinic. The interview didn't take more than an hour, and Clare was eager to start her new job on Monday. She'd be working the front desk with two other people. As she took in a deep breath, the tension rolled off her shoulders.

Arriving back at the condominium, she joined Jim and his mom on the lanai.

"How did it go?" asked Jim.

“I got the job. I start out at a better wage per hour than I was earning in Ohio.”

“That’s wonderful,” Grammy said. “When do you start?”

“I start on Monday, which will give us time to find a place.”

“I have some great news too, Clare,” Jim interrupted. “I got a job as an electrician with Cable and Sons.”

“That’s awesome.” Clare wrapped her arms around him and kissed his lips. “Now we just have to find a home.”

“That’s the other good news. I have three condominiums set up for us to look at when you’re ready. Mom said she’d watch Kayla.”

Clare hoped that things were falling into place. Maybe it wasn’t a bad idea after all to move down here. The sun was shining, and it was nearing eighty degrees at a little past 11:00 a.m.

“I’m ready now if you want to go,” Clare replied.

The first condominium was in the same vicinity as Grammy’s apartment, but a couple of driveways down and a different owner rented it. A two-bedroom condo on the third floor, it had a kitchen, living room and a small laundry area. It wasn’t the cleanest place Clare had seen, and for the price, it wasn’t big enough either, but of course, they weren’t in the north anymore.

The second place was farther away and much smaller than the last, and the cost was still more than Clare wanted to pay. The walls needed paint, and it had an odor. She rubbed her belly trying to calm the

nausea. The floors creaked, and the carpet had soil marks. Clare finished walking through and stood outside to get some fresh air.

There was no way in hell she was going to live in a place like that. They may not be rich, but they certainly weren't poor, and she had to think of Kayla.

The third condominium was somewhat bigger but located twenty miles from the beach, so the cost was cheaper. The rooms were wider, and it was on the first floor. Clare saw a short, medium built man standing in the parking lot. Her eyes focused on his hair. It was light brown, and she could tell it was a toupee. She snickered to herself, thinking about the wind blowing it off his head.

As you walked through the front door of the apartment there was a long hallway and to the left was a small bedroom with a huge bay window. Next to the bedroom was a stackable washer and dryer hidden away inside a small closet, and beside it was a full-size bathroom that was decorated with pink and yellow flowered wallpaper. *Very outdated*, Clare thought. *Don't these people ever redo the condominiums they own?*

The kitchen area was across the hall from the first small bedroom. It didn't look any bigger than the full-sized bathroom and no more than one person could stand in it at a time. There was a ledge on the kitchen counter, like a bar. The living room space was narrow instead of wide and had a balcony at the end. She walked through the living room, opened the slider to the outside, and imagined waking up and sitting outside drinking her coffee. The balcony was screened in, so

bugs and geckos couldn't come in. Entering the condominium again, she went into the master bedroom and saw another closet and a full-size bathroom off to the left.

The hallway, bathrooms, and kitchen were the only rooms with tiles on the floors. The bedrooms and living room had carpet.

Satisfied with what she'd seen, she walked back into the hallway where Jim and the owner Ken Watts were standing. Clare knew that this was the place. She pulled Jim aside and they discussed the terms.

"We'll take it," Jim said to Ken. "How much do we need to put down to move in?"

"First and last month's rent with five hundred security," Ken replied.

"When can we move in?" Clare asked.

"This weekend if you like, say Friday."

Clare made out the checks and handed them to Ken. "Thank you for your time today, we appreciate your showing us the condo," Clare said.

"No, thank you. Condos around here go quick, so you have to grab them while you can," said Ken as he reached into his briefcase and handed Clare a copy of the community agreement. "Rent is due the first of every month and the address is on the papers I just gave you. Once the papers are signed, the place is all yours. Make sure you read them, for they are fussy about the rules around here. It's two parking spaces per condo and the rest are visitors' parking. There is a pool on

the other side of the community, and you will need this key to open the gate to access it.” He handed the key to Jim. “If you have any questions, my number is on the paper. Feel free to call if you need anything.”

“Thanks, Ken.” Clare looked through the papers and then around the room.

Finishing the paperwork, they all walked out and said their goodbyes. The drive back to Grammy’s house was quiet as Clare daydreamed about furnishing their new home. She stared out of the window at all the homes and shops they passed wondering why she hadn’t noticed them earlier.

The week went by fast as Friday approached and they packed all their things in a rented moving truck and started organizing their new condominium. Clare did most of the unpacking, while Jim brought in the boxes. By that night, they had completed everything.

They spent Saturday shopping for groceries and a set of furniture to put on their outdoor area. That evening, Kayla played in her room while Clare made dinner. For the first time in a long while, she felt like they were a family again.

Rolling over, Clare pressed the button on the alarm as it buzzed. She couldn’t believe how the weekend had flown by and today she was starting her new job. Zeya said she’d watch Kayla while they went to

work. Clare spent time going through the Yellow Pages to look for a daycare where she could register Kayla in and found one a mile away. She planned on stopping in after work to check the place out and perhaps signing up Kayla. Zeya had talked to Clare last week about living down here permanently. She said she would watch Kayla for them, and they could just pay her the money instead of a daycare, but she wasn't sure if she could stay.

After parking her car, Clare strolled into the Immediate Care building. She introduced herself, and got comfortable in a chair at the front counter where she'd be working. David, a guy that had been there for over three years, showed her what she'd be doing. His brunette hair hung over his eyes as he explained the job to her.

Her heart raced, as she started to feel overwhelmed by the amount of people stampeding through the front doors. She greeted the first patient and took her insurance card, then entered the information while the woman filled out paperwork. She was being treated for a cough that she'd had for over two weeks. Clare heard a baby cry in the lobby to the right who was being treated for excessive vomiting.

Clare wasn't the only one working at the front desk. Along with David, there was Cathy, who had been there for several months.

It was 3:00 p.m. when she looked at the clock on the wall behind her. She filed patient folders in a rollaway cabinet for the last two hours

before leaving. Organizing was one of Clare's best talents and it passed the time when there was no work at the front desk to do.

After finishing up, she went over to the time clock and punched out for the day. On the drive home the traffic was unbelievable. There were vehicles lined up for miles. Clare didn't care for traffic nor was she used to it, after having lived in the country. She drove to the daycare near their condominium and talked to an elderly woman running the facility. They were taking registrations that week, which Clare was thankful for, and she signed Kayla up after the tour. She wrote a check and headed home to see her daughter.

"Yea, Mommy's home from work," Kayla shouted as she ran down the hall into Clare's arms.

"Yes, sweetheart, Mommy's home!"

Clare talked to Zeya about the daycare and then said their goodbyes. She watched Kayla from the kitchen while she made dinner. Jim arrived at 6:15p.m. and gave them both kisses before he went to have a shower.

During the meal, they spent time discussing their day. Jim was exhausted and mentioned how hot it was working outdoors, but nothing more. He asked Clare to fill up the water cooler for him tomorrow, so he didn't get dehydrated. She nodded, finished her meal, and then started washing the dishes.

That night they made love for the first time since they'd moved and fell asleep in each other's arms.

The following morning, Clare took Kayla to the daycare and walked her in. After showing her around, she kissed her on the cheek and hugged her goodbye.

Weeks passed by, and Clare was flying around the office. She had always been a fast learner, and this job was so much easier on her physically since she'd quit the factory where she'd worked up north. She had worked at the plant for ten years. Cabinet Makers, Inc. was one of the best jobs anyone could have in Ohio, since 9/11. Most of the other factories had closed down when the Twin Towers were hit. People were lucky to have any job around the world. The work she did, abused her arms, and she was diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome, but she took the money from the case instead of having the surgery because they had moved to Florida. The abdominal pain she'd been experiencing went away, probably because of having a hysterectomy last year, and her relationship with Jim was better than it had been in a long time.