



From Rum to Roots

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In 1937 near Portland Cottage, in southern Jamaica, on a huge sugar estate, Linton McMann, the illegitimate son of the owner of the plantation, works making rum. Meanwhile in Kingston, Daisy, helps her mother managing an ice business and dreams of joining her elder sister in New York.

Seeking opportunity, Linton leaves the deep Jamaican countryside for New York and the collapse of the ice business and family crises force Daisy to leave Kingston, seeking a new start in the United States. They encounter a vibrant Jamaican-American community in New York, where they meet at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem. Becoming American citizens, they marry, and start a family. Ambition drives them to start a business and Linton capitalizes on a skill he learned as a young man in Jamaica, making a drink known in Jamaica as "Roots." It proves wildly popular and the company, Family Roots, prospers beyond Linton's and Daisy's wildest dreams.

By 1986, the drink is a sensation. Money flows in, but something is missing. Happiness is as scarce as freshwater in the middle of the sea. Wrestling with their past while living in a land of plenty, Linton and Daisy discover that truth is the only avenue to happiness.

From Rum to Roots Details

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From Reader Review From Rum to Roots for online ebook

Daniel Baker says

Linton McMann, the bastard son of a wealthy plantation owner, toils away working at his father's rum distillery. He eventually makes his way to New York in pursuit of opportunity, and there he meets Daisy, a girl who left Jamaica for similar reasons, wanting to provide for two daughters she left with her mother in Kingston. Together, they start a family and begin a business venture producing roots tonic from a recipe entrusted to Linton in Jamaica and it quickly becomes a smashing success.

I'll start with some issues I had. It seems like the author really went out of his way to make this one of those sprawling birth-to-death epic life stories. That's all well and good, but at the same time some things seemed to get lost in the mix. First of all, Daisy's defining characterization from youth to adult seems jarringly inconsistent. In her youth Francis promotes her as an industrious young girl, clever, hardworking, and independent. That angle is quickly abandoned when we reach the beginning of her adulthood, which is characterized mostly by her becoming emotionally crippled as a result of a recurring cycle of abuse. By the end the author takes an entirely different route, focusing mostly on how success seems to corrupt her core values, while still making some attempt towards the end to shoehorn in some resolution from the middle portion. In all fairness it's really not too noticeable until given a fair amount of reflection because despite her being one of the main two characters, it rarely feels like she's the more prominent of the two. Each of the separate characterizations seem well-developed, it's just a shame that you never feel like you're reading about the same character. My next issue comes from the execution of their shift from traditional family values to becoming morally blinded money-fueled capitalists. Chain of events-wise everything is paced well, but the explanations and constant justifications seem overly simplistic and the parallels between Linton and his father seem heavy-handed. It just gets old after you realize they've gone off the deep end and every other character's attempt to address it is met with a blunt "money's everything blah blah blah" retort. Reading this I went very back and forth on whether or not I liked the book, and I don't think it was due simply to indecisiveness on my part, I'm convinced the quality of the writing was constantly wavering. I've got several other nitpicks, but I won't waste a ton of time with them...except to say the patois occasionally gets VERY distracting.

Now that all that's out of the way, THE GOOD. As you may have noticed, I had quite a few qualms with this book, but it did succeed in being consistently compelling. And Daisy and Linton's arc of moral corruption, despite being occasionally ham-fisted, did really resonate. I didn't write this review until a few days after finishing the book, which provided me with a little perspective because I wasn't honestly totally sure how I felt about it immediately after putting it down. And I think I can confidently say this book was well-researched, frequently heart-wrenching, and enjoyable throughout. It's certainly not without its flaws, but the good far outweighs the bad and, for a first book, Lloyd G. Francis could have done a lot worse.

J.L. Campbell says

STORYLINE: Linton McMann, the illegitimate son of a sugar plantation owner and Daisy Wellstead, daughter of a businesswoman start life in Jamaica.

Lincoln battles his resentment over being a shameful family secret, while Daisy goes through a privileged childhood, a horrific experience and a painful marriage.

Eventually, they both pull up roots and move to the United States where they meet and fall in love, but it's not all wine and roses. Although they've put their harsh start in life behind them, Linton and Daisy face challenges and come full circle recognizing the things that are most important in life.

Linton McMann is acquainted with suffering at an early age. Although he's part of his father's life, he isn't acknowledged as a son and is subjected to his father's cruelty. Linton is man enough to cut ties with his father and strike out on his own, despite what his father wants him to do. Linton is determined, loves deeply and is a hard worker. He's also stubborn and capable of being as cruel as his father. Ultimately, he's an admirable character.

Daisy is a likable individual until she allows her circumstances to change her personality and her vision. She thinks she's destined for bigger things than her lot in life on the island and has big dreams. She does achieve her goal of getting to the United States and that's when as Jamaicans would say, Daisy 'throw stone behind her'. I fell out of love with her based on her treatment of her children left behind in Jamaica and never quite fell in love with her again. By the end of the novel, she does redeem herself. I guess her actions are too much of a reminder of the state of mind of kids who in recent times have been referred to as 'barrel children'.

I LIKED: so many things about this novel. The view of Jamaica in the 1930's is priceless. The writer does a good job of capturing the essence of the time, both on the sugar plantation and the capital city as it was back then.

Jamaica seen through the eyes of the 'foreigners' is another treat, so too are the gradual changes that come with the passage of time. My favourite segment of the book is the portion that takes place on the island, although it is also the most painful.

The writer deserves praise for the development of the characters. Although Daisy grows into a woman I don't like, the writer redeems her somewhat through her actions toward the end of the book. Her husband Linton also proves selfish and turns into his father—a man he hates. Linton does rectify the wrongs done to his son, which is admirable.

I could have lived without some of the brutal scenes, however, they played their part in helping the reader understand how the main characters evolved into the people they are. I read this book during commute and had to take breaks from it as tears came to my eyes so many times. I felt that deeply for the characters.

OVERALL COMMENTS: From Rum to Roots is an intriguing, poignant and well-written story. Jamaica provides a wonderful setting, and the culture of the people comes alive on the pages. There are references to many things that I remember from my childhood as well as history lessons.

The message I took away from this book is that our successes in life mean nothing if they come at the expense of our family and conscience.

COVER NOTE: The cover complements the story and the title ties in neatly with the storyline.

SOURCE: From Rum to Roots was provided by CTC Blog Tours in exchange for a review.

Rating - 4.5 stars

Lade Tawak says

Free copy courtesy of author

I don't know what exactly I was expecting but this book is better than anything I could imagine

Now and then it's good to pause in our pursuit of happiness and just be happy.

This is an emotional and deep story of the longing for a better life. The book is mostly in English with most of the dialogue in Patois (Jamaican dialect). At first, the Patois slows you down but you get used to it and it becomes easier to understand.

It is very well written. No plot holes. No unnecessary details. It's perfection

The book pulls you in and you feel like you're one of the cast.

Every character is well developed and adds to the story. Each scene comes to life.

"Linton," he said, "yuh will not know happiness without forgiveness. Yuh can't make dem scars on yuh back disappear, but you can make these scars, in here—" he thumped his chest with his fist,—" dem can heal. Dat's forgiveness.

Recommended to everyone really

Read full review here

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Alana says

From Rum to Roots is the debut novel from author Lloyd G. Francis. When I received the invitation to participate in the blog tour through Closed the Cover, I jumped at the opportunity after reading the synopsis, and the book met all of my expectations and then some.....

From Rum to Roots is a story of an often untold immigrant experience that turns the history of Jamaica and America in the early part of the 20th century into a mesmerizing, richly detailed narrative with characters who are endearing but flawed, and who epitomize the human struggle to survive and overcome daunting odds. Linton and Daisy must both overcome personal histories full of pain, guilt and hurt, and until they do so, they can never truly find complete happiness, despite the material wealth that they gain as they become financially successful. Money truly cannot buy happiness, and their attempts to shut out their past causes friction and a nagging sense of emptiness, and for Daisy, it also causes a nearly irreparable rift between herself and the daughters that she left behind in Jamaica. This story speaks to the very real struggle that many immigrants to this country face—the desire to assimilate into American life without losing their past and heritage completely. For Daisy and Linton, their heritage does not represent a source of pride and comfort, but instead serves as a reminder of the struggles and tragedies that they left behind. They must ultimately realize that burying the past does not bury the pain, and that they cannot heal themselves by turning their

backs on their roots, but rather by embracing them and drawing on the wisdom and pride of their ancestors and homeland. *From Rum to Roots* is a moving, deeply fulfilling novel that will linger in the minds of readers long after the final page is turned. This is a first-rate effort from a new author and a worthy piece of contemporary fiction that speaks not just to the immigrant experience, but to the general human experience as well.

To read my entire review, visit my book review blog, *Book Talk with Alana* at <http://booktalkwithalana.blogspot.com>

Peggy says

I bought this book a while back as a kobo deal, attracted by the title, the cover and the setting. I really liked the descriptions of Jamaica, what the country looks like, what the people are like, how they celebrate special events etc. I also liked the Patois (Jamaican dialect) that was used. I didn't have problems understanding it, but in the first few chapters it slowed me down because I repeated those sentences in my head with a Jamaican accent.

Despite these good things, the story and the writing were not really doing it for me, especially the middle I found a bit slow. It picked up again towards the end. The story kept me reading, but never really grabbed me. I like that the story is told from two perspectives and that it covers many years, but due to that the story was often too descriptive of what happened in between two points in time, instead of things actually happening. The main characters, Linton and Daisy, clearly had some flaws, which I suppose made them human, but I found them hypocrites in the second half of the book and I can't stand hypocrites.

Lilisa says

An absorbing page turner, steeped in the richness of Jamaican culture, first-time author Lloyd Francis' *Rum to Roots* kept me engrossed from start to finish. I could visualize the fields of cane, the rum distillery, the alcohol fumes, the domestic violence and the ganja-smoking young men. I could feel the emotional swings, the ups and downs, the hope and despair, the love and the hate - all this captured and packaged in Jamaican patois when emotions run high. The novel follows the life of Linton McMann, the secret illegitimate son of a wealthy distillery businessman in the community of Portland Cottage in Jamaica. Yearning for his father's acknowledgment and love, Linton is deeply influenced and scarred by his father's rejection, which he carries well into adulthood and which never leaves him. But despite this and following periods of life's harsh circumstances, he finds love and success when he immigrates to the U.S. Following hard work and persistent perseverance, he realizes the American dream - having a family, owning his own business and owning his own house. But his Jamaican roots, culture and haunting boyhood experiences never leave him and he returns to confront his ghosts and make peace with where he came from. A sometimes solitary and haunted individual, Linton's character elicits empathy and support from the reader, while not always condoning his actions. A well-written novel that captures the lure of the land and culture, as well as the range of emotions human beings can experience. A highly recommended read.

Shannon says

It's tough to put all the likes and dislikes together for this one. So here it is all jumbled together...

The book gets stuck in a rut in some places and then seems to skip right over critical events in others. There was an awkward transition each time the narrative tries to span time. I love the historical fiction slant because historical fiction is my favorite genre. There is an interesting compare and contrast between what's happening in the US versus what's happening in Jamaica during the same time frame. But then there are at least two different coming of age stories going on and I'm sure I could identify an additional genre that's thrown into the mix. I did truly enjoy the immigrant story, which is central to this book. I often forget there are many places where it doesn't matter how hard you work; the class you're born in is the class you die in. I appreciate the author's attention to this detail. The characters' awareness of it plays a critical role in the way things unfold. And then there's that thing about Caribbean literature that always makes me want to revisit. I loved the descriptions of characters' homeland and the descriptions of the food made me want to run to the nearest West Indian restaurant.

There's so much to love yet quite a few rough patches. I could sense where the author was going with this novel and it's the reason I stuck with it. I had to push at times, but in the end I was rewarded.

Lisa DeViney says

I should disclose: I am in love with Jamaica... Having said that, I am always on the search for good immigration stories, particularly those that land in NYC. This book tickled me in all the right places. It follows 2 characters from different parts of Jamaica, born into different circumstances, who meet in NYC after immigrating. The whole cast of characters in the book are raw, relate-able, flawed, human... the story is filled with ambition, secrets, regrets, loss, and lessons that took a lifetime to learn. The story tracks both families of both Daisy and Linton throughout a lifetime, as well as their first generation, American-born children. It's a story of Jamaica struggling for independence in a changing world and pursuit of the American dream. Skillfully written, I am surprised *From Rum to Roots* was a first novel for Lloyd Francis. I look forward to his future books. I absolutely loved it.

Dawn says

I was given a free copy of this book for an honest review.

From Rum to Roots starts in Jamaica in the 1930s. It contains a lot of history and gives the reader a good idea of the people of Jamaica, their traditions, and the hierarchy during that time. Many of the conversations are written in patois, which made the story more interesting, but it was difficult for me to follow at times. There is a key in the back of the book, however, that is helpful.

The characters are complex and well developed. Major is a typical plantation owner but it is easy to dislike him. On the other hand, I felt sorry for Linton, at least when he was young.

Linton and Daisy both overcome poverty and difficult beginnings in Jamaica and both had dreams of coming to America to find a new life. It was sad to read how they continued to hide from their pasts and tried to find

happiness through success and money. It got to the point that I could not stand how Daisy neglected her two oldest girls. Both Daisy and Linton finally figured out what is most important in life but, in my opinion, it was much too late.

What an emotional read! I definitely recommend *From Rum to Roots*.

Dianne says

Two young Jamaican immigrants come to the United States in search of a better life, each with their own reasons for leaving their homes and the family behind. Meeting in a new country, with so much in common, both filled with ambition, they marry, raise a family and find success of sorts living the American Dream. But does financial success really give them the happiness they dream of?

Linton McMann was born the secret son of a wealthy plantation owner, not afforded the luxury of claiming his birthright, yet expected to be “better” than other plantation workers by a father who is demanding and often harsh, for “appearance sake.” Daisy sees her opportunity to leave behind her old life when her mother’s business flounders, but she has left more than bad memories in Jamaica. Is the ability to buy whatever she wanted and live an excessive lifestyle worth what she has given up? Have Linton and Daisy over-indulged their young children in an effort to forget their pasts? Will there be resentment from the new additions to the family? The clash between the new life in the United States and the old one in Jamaica becomes more apparent as each day passes and a sometimes naïve younger generation finds a “romantic legend” in a hated past for their parents. Will past mistakes haunt the future? In the long run, was the American Way really an improvement over the Jamaican way of life? How does one get back to their roots?

Told over decades of time, and miles of cultural differences, by Lloyd G. Francis tells an emotionally deep tale of longing for a better life, and finding that maybe the grass isn’t always as green as it looks. Life is what you make it, how you value it and whether you truly know what is important. This tale has its dark sides and the drama often runs high, as each well-developed character adds their piece to the story. Perfectly interspersed lighter moments add brilliant depth to this family saga. Each scene comes to life, from the racial/class issues in Jamaica to the excesses of America.

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Available to Purchase From: Amazon / Barnes & Noble

For more reviews check out Tome Tender's Book Blog or find us on Facebook.

Ashley says

I have a deep fascination with American history from 1920 – 1950 and felt immediately intrigued by a novel

that starts in the same era in Jamaican history. From Rum to Roots begins in Southern Jamaica, near Portland Cottage, in 1937. Linton McMann works on a sugar estate owned by the biological father who refuses to publicly acknowledge him as his son. Meanwhile, Daisy works in Kingston alongside her mother all the while harboring dreams of moving to New York and reuniting with her sister.

Francis is an incredibly talented writer and the poetic way in which he weaves his words is sure to captivate readers from page one. During his youth Francis traveled and spent time in Jamaica with his family which obviously influences his writing and his storytelling. The people, the culture and the identity of Jamaica feels so genuine; it is nearly intoxicating. The character personalities are so deep and honest that at times it is hard to believe that this is a work of fiction. The character dialogue and language can be a bit troublesome early on as Francis does write in the Jamaican dialect which is unusual at first. Most readers should be able to quickly catch on but there is a reference in the back of the book if needed.

Eventually Linton and Daisy both relocate (separately) to the United States and Francis does a great job of transitioning his writing. He captures the cultural shift between Jamaica and American so well. Linton and Daisy encounter a vibrant Jamaican-American community in New York and eventually meet at an event in Harlem. They marry, start a family, open their own business and head in in search of the American Dream.

Linton and Daisy's business is a success and soon the money is flowing in but something is missing. Linton and Daisy find that prosperity doesn't equal happiness. They spent so much time, in the book and in their lives, trying to run and hide from their pasts that they missed out on seeing what was really important. Ultimately they realize that the truth is the only avenue to happiness but is it too late for them? Can they reconnect with their pasts? Will they be able to overcome their mistakes and finally find true happiness? The answers lie within the end of the book and I highly suggest you check it out.

Review by Ashley LaMar
Closed the Cover

patty says

For anyone who really loved the book "The Harder They Come." Excellent debut novel from Lloyd Francis. Yeah, mon!

John Orr says

This is a fine novel, told with the exacting eye for detail expected from a top-rate professional photographer, which is Mr. Francis' profession when he is not writing.

There is a fine representation of life in Jamaica in the 1930s and in American in following years.

I was particularly tickled by the story of two boys who'd been born in the United States, and their reaction upon visiting Jamaica with their mother. One of them his horrified by the island ways, which seem primitive to him. The other revels in being in a place where there are so many black people -- black people who are not afraid of white people.

Mr. Francis tells a story of coming to America and the changes wrought by the pursuit of success.

It's funny, touching and involving.

David Duncan says

Really enjoyed, what a great book. This is my 12 book I've read from goodreads. This book has a strong Jamaican history dating back to the early 1930s. Mr Francis does great justice to what it must have been like to live their during that period. His family background and being a photojournalist, he was able to capture the life of the men and women during this time. I found it interesting how two boys with the same father but different mother, who grew up on the same plantation were treated so different. One with love and education, the other the life of a slave. The slave Linton McMann how he toils away in a rum distillery of his father's.

During this time frame Daisy Wellstead from Kingston Jamaica, runs into all kinds of misfortune, being raped, then a unhappily marriage. They both immergrate to the United States at different times. They both immergrate to New York where they both work at menial jobs, they find each other, fall in love and start a family. Linton is not happy with his work and the money is not enough for a family, so he starts a new business selling root tonic. It's a drink that Linton learned how to make from his first wife who died in Jamaica.

The McManns had moved to California, the root drink becomes a real success, that over the years he has businesses in California and New York. There is still something missing. You will find the ending to this book very interesting. I think this is a must read for young adults and up. This author makes you feel like you are part of the story. I hope to read more of his books.

Brianna C says

"Yuh nevah goin' achieve anything lasting in life, worryin' 'bout what men think and what woman goin' sey."

This is yet another example of a historical fiction that more people need to know about and read. For me, this definitely opened my eyes to a time and place I never really knew about, but I certainly want to learn more. This follows the lives and families of Linton and Daisy and after they become entwined. While it does focus on Linton and Daisy, you do learn about other members of their family.

"Linton," he said, "yuh will not know happiness without forgiveness. Yuh can't make dem scars on yuh back disappear, but you can make these scars in here--" he thumped his chest with his fist, "--dem can heal. Dat's forgiveness. Maybe, yuh haffi lose more before yuh unnerstan."

Linton grew up on a farm/ranch in Jamaica that is owned by his father, Major. The thing about their relationship is that Linton is his bastard son so he never wants to acknowledge him as his son. This leads to some issues for Linton and is never really able to be honest about it. It certainly leads to other issues with his own son, but he is eventually able to overcome it and move past these problems. He is able to basically start as nothing in Jamaica and become a major business owner in America. He truly fits the "American dream"

concept that so many people came to this country to achieve. At the same time, he eventually finds a way to hold onto his heritage.

"We'll be okay as long as Linton keeps the money flowing. Flowing and growing. We can do anything with money, we can be anything with money, it's money that secures the future in this world and I want our future to be secure."

Daisy has her own tribulations in Jamaica and reasons to leave. Due to these unresolved issues, she also changes tremendously and isn't entirely able to form proper relationships with her family while in America. She falls into the normal trap of "money buying happiness". She is able to overcome this, but not without some consequences. I found it interesting to see how Linton and Daisy interpret being American differently and how they were affected by their own tribulations and were able to overcome them.

"The tree may have fallen, Daisy thought, *but the roots are still alive.*"

Overall, I enjoyed this WAY more than I thought I would. It was pretty easy to read (especially once you got used to the Jamaican patois) and quick to get through. You can just fall into the lives of this family and no joke, I totally almost cried in a few places. That hasn't happened to me in ages. It was a nice blend of fact, fiction, and emotions. I would strongly recommend this to anyone and everyone I can. This was one of my favorite reads (possibly my favorite adult read) this year!

This review and more on my blog [Listful Booking](#).
