



The Small Fortune of Dorothea Q

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Thirty years of family secrets. Three generations of women. One family heirloom that could change everything.

When she ran away from her childhood home in Guyana, Rika swore that she would never return. Cut off from her family, she has fought hard to make a life for herself and daughter, Inky, in London.

Now, over thirty years later, Rika's cantankerous, wheelchair-bound mother, Dorothea, arrives in London. But as old wounds re-open, Dorothea and Rika are further apart than ever.

Inky soon learns that her grandmother is sitting on a small fortune. As she uncovers the secrets of the past one by one, she unravels the tragedy that tore her mother and grandmother apart. But nothing can prepare her, or Rika, for Dorothea's final, unexpected revelation.

An epic, mesmerizing tale of tragic loss, the strength of words left unspoken, and the redeeming power of love.

The Small Fortune of Dorothea Q Details

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From Reader Review The Small Fortune of Dorothea Q for online ebook

Renita D'Silva says

Sharon Maas recreates her storytelling magic with 'The Small Fortune of Dorothea Q'. Her writing sparkles as usual and right from the first page you are drawn into the story and absorbed in the wonderful world and characters Sharon has created with such aplomb. I loved Inky, her name, her exuberance, her innocence and her fierce protectiveness of her mother. Rika reminded me of myself as a child. I could relate to Rika. I loved Dorothea's feisty character, her loyalty and especially loved her as a cantankerous old lady and the interaction between her and Inky. This story had so many facets, so much wisdom. I loved this book so much that I couldn't bear to be parted from it, going so far as to download it onto my phone so I could take it everywhere with me. Another absolutely fabulous offering from the brilliant Sharon Maas.

Emma Deplores Goodreads Censorship says

I am slowly learning about the importance of choosing the right circumstances under which to read a book. This one I read while traveling with family, and I found its brand of lively melodrama perfect for semi-distracted, oft-interrupted reading. Judging from *Of Marriageable Age*, which I read years ago, had this book received my full attention, it likely would have irritated me; as is, I enjoyed it. That said, it is quite similar to *Of Marriageable Age*, and if you loved that one to pieces you should go ahead and read this.

The Small Fortune of Dorothea Q follows three generations of Guyanese women: there's Dorothea, a tough and outspoken crusader; her daughter Rika, a sensitive and socially awkward artist; and Rika's daughter Inky, a modern teen who grows up in London. The story begins when the elderly Dorothea comes to live with Rika and Inky, opening old wounds and bearing a precious antique stamp. While it begins with Inky's first-person narrative, the bulk of the novel uses the third person to trace Dorothea's and Rika's pasts in Guyana.

The novel is entertaining and well-paced, though predictable and cliché. It has all the elements you'd expect from a good soap: love triangles, secret parentage, accidents followed by tearful epiphanies at hospital bedsides, amnesia, characters presumed dead only to reappear, Big Misunderstandings that could be cleared up in under 5 seconds if the characters actually spoke to each other, important letters that aren't read... you get the idea. That said, this novel is an above-average version of that; Maas develops the story well, and Dorothea and Rika are well-drawn and sympathetic characters. (I can't say the same for Inky, who is a stereotypically self-centered modern teen without any interesting qualities. Inky's interpretation of the ending also seemed to me dead wrong. (view spoiler) Perhaps it was Maas's intent that Inky doesn't understand people nearly as well as she thinks she does; it's hard to tell.) The setting is also interesting and we learn a bit about Guyanese history and culture.

This isn't great literature, but it is an entertaining family saga. It would make great airplane, beach, or doctor's office reading. Don't assume from the page count that it will last, though; it goes by quickly.

Kim says

This book follows three generations of the same family in Guyana and London. Rika left Guyana 30 years ago and said that she'd never be back. She now lives in London with her daughter Inky. She had a very difficult life in Guyana and escapes the past. Inky has never met any of her relatives until they have to take her Grandma in to look after her. Rika finds it hard to cope with her mother- old wounds haven't healed and she's not an easy character.

Inky discovers what happened to make her mother flee from her past, there are lots of surprises revealed throughout the book.

It's wonderful to read about other countries in such a beautifully described setting. Loved the images produced by losing yourself in the pages. The cover on this one is so beautiful and would make me pick the book up to discover more.

Many thanks to the publisher and Net galley for the chance to read this book.

Emma Crowley says

The Small Fortune of Dorothea Q has such a beautiful cover and intriguing title that I instantly wanted to read it without even glancing through the blurb. I only discovered the delights Bookouture offer late last year and was highly impressed with The Poets Wife by Rebecca Stonehill so I had high expectations for this new novel by Sharon Maas. This is a big story spanning three generations of women from the Quint family from the 30's right up until the 00's. With such a huge timespan and three very different women to focus on the book only really got going in the second half but once it did I was racing through the pages of this beguiling, thought provoking and at times puzzling story. This is a book about much more than a stamp of major historical importance. It explores the lives, loves, loss and misunderstanding that circle around many families and how elements of the past always have a bearing on the future.

Set in Guyana (formerly British Guiana) it was wonderful to read a book which was set in a really different country to where I live, where I knew nothing of their culture or even where the country was (I do admit to looking it up on Google), these sections were well written and I got lost in the stories of Dorothea and Rika although they did take quite a while to get going. In general, I found I did trudge through the first half I thought I wasn't getting anywhere and I think this was mainly because there was so much setting up to do with so much backstory to give in relation to the three main characters Inky, Rika and Dorothea. There were lots of links to establish and plots to lay the foundations for that many of these storylines only really bore fruit in the second half.

I admit I was tempted to give up, after being so eager to read this I was disappointed that I wasn't gripped straight away but now I am ever so glad that I persisted because once I got to the halfway point everything started coming together and things made more sense. I began to realise why characters acted and felt the way they did and the whole book appeared more cohesive I felt the story really gathered pace and strength. The chapters were shorter and more to the point and each left you hanging wanting to know what was in store. Focusing on three female members of the same family Dorothea, Rika and Inky the book jumps back and forth quite often as we learn of Dorothea's childhood in Guyana as she navigates the world of growing up

and falling in love and how war changes everything. We met Rika in the 60's she is Dorothea's daughter and cannot understand why she is not loved in the same way as her siblings. Rika feels neglected and unloved and there is open bitterness and almost hostility towards her. She loves reading and writing and uses this as her escape but at the same time she wants to be what she feels is normal like all the other girls and a situation brings forth the harsh realities of having your emotions fooled around with. Inky is Rika's daughter, she has never met any of her mother's family until they are forced to take in her Gran from Guyana and care for her. Inky seemed the least developed of the three and I felt I didn't know or care for her as much as the other two women but the other two storylines made up for this.

Rika has had no contact with her family for many years and it is a big step up for her to take on her mother once again and care for her in her old age. A stamp seems to connect them all but there is so much more going on here than just a piece of paper. The author really made me like Dorothea when I read about her story in the 30's but in the 60's and 00's she appeared a totally changed woman and in a way a mean and slighted hated person who had lost her warmth and compassion. I was eager to keep reading to see what had caused such a turnaround in a character that had seemed to have her whole life ahead of her but somehow things had not gone to plan.

There are way too many twists and turns and unexpected events and surprises in this book to attempt to go into here. This book is rich in detail and emotion and has the most beautiful and real description of loss I have ever read. Despite initial hesitations with this book I am glad to have discovered a new author who in the end successfully had me turning the pages to reach the end of a well written compelling tale.

Marianne says

The Small Fortune of Dorothea Q is the fourth original novel by Guyanese-born author, Sharon Maas. When Dorothea Quint, the grandmother from Guyana that she has never met, comes to London to stay, Inky Temple is intrigued as to the cause of the thirty-year estrangement that has existed between her mum, Rika, and Dorothea. But Rika is tight-lipped, and Dorothea is less than forthcoming.

Stubborn and cantankerous, Dorothea, with a crafty glint in her eye, shows Inky the family heirloom, an old Guyanese stamp that she claims is "worth a small fortune". A sceptical Inky does some research and is surprised about the value of this dirty-looking scrap: "And I felt it, gnawing at my insides like a virus, the little rodent of greed".

Tasked with cooking for Dorothea (her mum being a hopeless cook), Inky discovers a thriving Guyanese community right there in London, and while the church services are a bit overwhelming, she finds herself completely swept away by the community's friendliness and by all this delicious Guyanese food. "A proper Guyanese! She eats everything but rope, soap and iron!"

Maas uses three narratives to tell her tale: the narrative from Dorothea's point of view describes events during the nineteen-thirties, forties and fifties; the sixties are told from Rika's perspective; and Inky's first person narrative relates the events at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the noughties.

Maas gives the reader an interesting cast of characters, characters with very human flaws, who develop and mature so that we slowly learn how an unhappy teenaged Dorothea becomes a fiery activist for women's rights, how budding novelist Rika ended up rejecting all things Guyanese to become a vegetarian TV script writer, and finally, exactly why Rika has refused all contact with her mother for over thirty years.

This novel, with a few twists and surprises, examines the (sometimes tragic) effects of powerful emotions on lives: blame, guilt, grief, resentment, fear of loving, contrition, pride, and forgiveness are all very much part of the story. As are greed and the sometimes insane values we assign to material things by virtue of their rarity: “‘When you think about it, Inky,’ she said to me, ‘All it is, is a scrap of paper. A tiny little scrap of paper any normal person would chuck in the rubbish. Isn’t it crazy, that people run around like headless chickens over a scrap of paper? Isn’t it fascinating, the way we fixate on a thing, and out of our own minds, out of desire, instil it with value?’”

While this is fiction, it is apparent from the authentic feel of this wonderful tale that Maas has drawn on her own experiences, her Guyanese heritage, and her family history. Readers who enjoy this novel will be pleased to know that there is a companion volume, *The Secret Life of Winnie Cox*, which expands on the life of one of the more endearing characters of this novel, Ma Quint. This is another superb offering from this talented author.

Sara says

Another great book by Sharon Maas! I loved learning more about Guyana, the history and the people. The characters in the novel—three generations of women from the same family—were wonderfully flawed and beautiful.

Arielle Deltoro says

Review originally posted on my blog www.LivingLifeWithJoy.com

The Small Fortune of Dorothea Q was a touching story that was filled with intriguing characters and important real-life issues. Because it was the first novel I’ve ever read by Sharon Maas, I went in with an open mind to the type of story she had written. It’s not my general type of novel because it wasn’t chick-lit filled with drama, laughs and love. Every so often I like to step outside my comfort zone and read a novel that has a bit more depth than the average rom-com. What I got from this novel [that could be classified as women’s fiction], was a wonderful story filled with important topics. I’m not a fan of the novel’s style of going back and forth between past and present, but it did lend a certain element of surprise that would not have been possible if the story was told in order from beginning to end. Although it was a slower read for me, I thoroughly enjoyed every minute spent reading it.

There were many passages throughout the novel that were thought-provoking and philosophical. Some of the most important concepts involved love, racism, and respect. One of my favorite lines from this novel was that “Love isn’t a duty“. Love is earned and given and it is one of the most precious things in existence. It is with love that we care for others and it is with love that we sometimes retreat from those that matter most in order to protect them. It is also with love that we learn to move on from tragedy and embrace the good things in our lives. This story is filled with tragic love and family ties that are bound in secrets and misunderstandings. These situations and issues were all wrapped up in a foundation of love.

Throughout the novel, there are numerous situations where white people are treated as though they are superior to black people. It was sad to read that being white could ever ‘make’ someone better and that

behaving, dressing and speaking like white people was something to aspire to. It's unfortunate that we ever had such prominent racism in our world, but what's even more upsetting is that it still exists today.

One of my favorite messages in the book was to be yourself. It takes more strength to be true to yourself than to simply follow the horde of what everyone else is doing. This idea went back to racism and standing up for yourself and what is right and just. It also correlated to staying true to who you are and not dressing or acting a certain way because it's perceived as cool or will make you popular.

The Small Fortune of Dorothea Q was a wonderful story with powerful messages about love, life and learning to let things go in order to be happy. It was a beautiful story about tragic love and ultimately about forgiveness. I highly recommend this novel if you are interested in reading a story about overcoming difficult situations, with a few laughs and some interesting characters along the way. "Freedom and happiness come with letting go."

Caroline Mitchell says

Another beautiful book by Sharon Mass. I was initially drawn in by the cover, but everything about this story shines. It features the story of three strong female characters, Dorothea, grandmother, Rika, her daughter, and Inky, her niece. A very touching story which brings you on a journey of loss, love and discovery.

MetLineReader says

Great story, nicely written. Sharon Maas has a warmth to her style that allows you engage with the characters. I liked the multiple narration and timelines, thank heavens for the signposting or I would have been really confused.

Story rattles on at a fair old pace but the plot doesn't really develop until the 2nd half of the book.

It felt like a modern saga with many layers to be peeled away. The ending wasn't as shocking as I think the author hoped for but I loved the descriptions of "home" very compelling - even the colours and smells of Brixton market made it sound appealing!!

Well Worth a read, not too deep, not scary but interesting interplay between members of a family - and deals with history and estrangement in a gentle fashion.

4* because it was good!

Rebecca Stonehill says

First and foremost, I'd like to say that this was a fascinating read in terms of highlighting the culture and history and country of Guyana which I must confess I knew pitifully little about previously. Reading this made me really want to go there! I hugely enjoyed this three-generational tale, revolving around three women whom Maas succeeds in rendering utterly unique and believable. I particularly enjoyed the voice of Dorothea herself as an older woman, she was a wonderfully warm, sparky character. I'd definitely recommend this novel to people who enjoy learning about new places whilst also enjoying a cracking good yarn.

Kathe Coleman says

The Small Fortune of Dorothea Q by Sharon Maas

“An epic, mesmerizing tale of tragic loss, the strength of words left unspoken, and the redeeming power of love. Thirty years of family secrets. Three generations of women. One family heirloom that could change everything.

The Small Fortune of Dorothea Q is a multi-generational story of Dorothea Quint, her daughter Rika (Frederika), and grand-daughter Inky (Inca). We skip back and forth through the decades, discovering the loves and dramas of the three women, in colonial British Guyana (South America), post-colonial Guyana, and modern London. The three protagonists of this story are wonderful women with a very strong character but very different from each other. Dorothea, grandmother, Rika, her daughter, and Inky, Rifka's daughter. Inky is 18 years old was born and raised in London and has never visited the country from which her mother, Guyana. Rika has not seen her mother for more than 30 years: she has run away from home very young and since she is a proud woman has never apologized, so her mother. She married the wrong man: drunk, unfaithful, irresponsible. She is now widowed and in debt. Dorothea has always lived in Guyana, lately no longer self-sufficient, living on a wheelchair and her daughter Marion takes care of her. But now Marion wants to go live with her daughter who is about to give birth and she can no longer care for her mother. The other two sons of Dorothea have their wife too busy in their career to manage a nagging mother-in-law in a wheelchair. The only that can take care of her is Rika, her brothers will help her financially with the costs. Inky will see for the first time grandmother, her only grandma: she has never known, they have written letters only when she was very small but then their communications were reduced to a Christmas card. Inky is hoping to finally find out what is the awful secret that it did quarrel mother and grandma so hard as not to see each other for 30 years. Another protagonist of the story is a family heirloom, a stamp that seems to be unique in the world.” Maybe it is timing or maybe it just hit all my personal “like” buttons but loved this book

Bettie? says

[Bettie's Books (hide spoiler)]

Bookworm says

Dear Sharon,

Thanks for another masterpiece - your best so far. Maybe because of the autobiographical links you describe at your blog.

I not just learned about (British) Guyana, I also learnt about life, love and family. The characters seemed to become alive and told their stories themselves. I lived with them, laughed with them, cried with them. After finishing the book I am happy they have found peace but also sad I had to say goodbye to them.

Thanks for your novel, I am looking forward to your next one!

Donna Irwin says

An absolute gem ! Loved this story of three generations of Guyanese women and the tragedies that linked and estranged them. The characters were really well drawn and the movement between the three different generations worked really well. Vivid descriptions of Guyana made it come alive. Definitely recommend!

Laura says

I received this book as a digital ARC from the publisher through Net Galley in return for an honest review.

This is the first book written by Sharon Maas I've read and I really liked it.

This is a family saga's story with the central plot around an original British Guiana One Cent 1856 stamp printed in black on magenta.

Through this valuable stamp, the author describes the life of three generations of women: Rika, who run away from Guyana and went to live in London where she raised her daughter Inky; after thirty years, Rika's mother - Dorothea - arrives in London, to meet her daughter and her grand-child.

Even after a long separation period between mother and daughter, their differences and their old wounds are still coming up.

When Inky learns about the old stamp, she decides to find out the hidden secrets of her family, specially the tragic events that felt apart mother and daughter.

The book is very well written with a nice description of the Guyanese people and costumes. By also living in a colonized country, I do know how the local people has to struggle sometimes against their own origins. And once you start to read this book, you will be entangled in the life of these three amazing women.

Location 2301:

If you turn everything into money you don't know you lose the past? An' if you lose the past don' know you lose your soul?

For further information about this most expensive stamp ever found, please visit the link below:

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