




The Chocolate Promise

Josephine Moon

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Christmas Livingstone has 10 rules for happiness.

Nurturing the senses every day, doing what you love, and sharing joy with others are some of the rules but the most important for her is number 10 - 'Absolutely no romantic relationships'.

Her life is good. In her enchantingly seductive shop, The Chocolate Apothecary, she tempers chocolate and creates handmade pieces; her friends and family surround her; and her secret life of wish granting brings joy to herself and others. She doesn't need a handsome botanist ace who knows everything about cacao to walk into her life. One who has the nicest grandmother intent on interfering, who's adopted a gorgeous rescue dog, and who needs her help to write a book on her passion, chocolate. She really doesn't need any of that at all.

Or does she?

Set across Tasmania, Paris and Provence, this is a glorious novel of a creative woman about to find out how far in life a list of rules will take her, with an enticing tangle of freshly picked herbs, pots of flowers, and delicious chocolate scented the background.

The Chocolate Promise Details

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From Reader Review *The Chocolate Promise* for online ebook

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

A sweet tale about love, friendship, family and chocolate, *The Chocolate Promise* is Josephine Moon's second novel.

Christmas Livingstone is doing what she loves, making and selling gourmet chocolate treats in her very own store, The Chocolate Apothecary, and spreading joy, helping those in need in her community. She has ten simple rules for happiness, all of which have helped her rebuild her life after fleeing heartbreak three years previously and she is determined to stick with them, even when Lincoln van Luc, a botanist, wanders into her shop and threatens the most important rule of all... 'Absolutely no romantic relationships'.

"The rules, she reminded herself. The rules were there for her protection. The rules had served her well and kept her steady for the past three years. Now was not the time to abandon the rules."

Christmas is happy with the life she has made for herself and the plans she has for the future but the rules that have allowed her to rebuild her life begin to chafe when first wins a place on a week-long course with a world-renowned French chocolatier, and then she meets Lincoln. Christmas (a ridiculous name btw) is creative, intelligent and kind but she is also emotionally closed off due to a dysfunctional childhood and a recent trauma. Moon gently guides her character into dealing with her past and opening up her heart as the story unfolds.

The romantic relationship between Christmas and Lincoln is complicated by Christmas's 'rules' and Lincoln's wunderlust. Lincoln, a botanist, has spent most of his life traveling the world and doesn't plan to stay in Tasmania long. He has returned to help his Nan, a wonderful character, and work on his book, but falling in love with Christmas forces him to reassess his future.

I delighted in the settings, a small town in Tasmania with 'period' tourist appeal, the Chocolate Apothecary sounds like a pretty store and I could easily imagine the tempting treats gracing the shelves and the rich smell of molten chocolate. Francophiles will enjoy Christmas's sojourn in France touring the countryside exploring lavender farms in Provence, and whipping up treats like a champagne and vodka chocolate ganache to coat fresh raspberries in Aix.

This novel, with its appealing characters and feel good storyline, is a lovely way to treat yourself on a lazy afternoon, but be warned, you will be craving chocolate before you are through, so make sure you have your favourite on hand.

Lee says

The one promise this book delivers is that of chocolate. There are lots of beautiful descriptions of making, eating, and drinking chocolate in this novel. The book should actually come with a warning for those of us trying to lose weight.

The promise of anything else, however...

Christmas (I probably wouldn't have minded this name until I got the explanation of it near the end of the book which was quite pathetic given her mother's behaviour throughout) wrote herself a list of rules to live by after breaking up with her boyfriend. Rule number ten is 'absolutely no romantic relationships'.

Don't get fooled by the publicity or blurb of the book. The rules, after they're printed on the first page of the book, are rarely referred to again. And even when number ten is, it's Christmas telling herself that she will obviously have to break it. So, all in all, the rules are not an important part of the plot.

Christmas is working in her shop (I must admit, I seriously want to go to this shop) when Lincoln, a bearded biologist who's just returned from South America, walks in. Their romance works for the first half of the book, but somewhere along the line the weakness of the obligatory conflict affected my overall enjoyment of the book. Their chemistry is questionable, and at times I assumed they were falling in love simply because there were no other possible candidates in their vicinity.

The author also introduces several characters but then dumps them without offering any resolution. Christmas's father is probably the biggest one that I was left confused about after turning the final page. Yes, there is a lovely moment between Christmas and her ex-stepfather, but it doesn't make up for the whole build up of the novel which indicated Christmas would get some closure with the French perhaps-goat farmer. Why include the trip to France for nothing?

Also in France we met the South African hottie, Jackson. I really didn't understand the point to his character at all. Christmas is obviously attracted to him, she gets butterflies in the tummy etc when he's around, but oh wait, she's in love with Lincoln... She even invites Jackson to stay with her in her motel and I'm not naive enough to believe she meant on that foldout bed, but oh wait, she's in love with Lincoln...

Lincoln meanwhile has more chemistry with Christmas's friend, Emily, and their 'meet cute' situations were much more fun than any he had with Christmas.

Christmas's sideline occupation of being a fairy godmother is also brought into the book, only to be tossed aside. I assume it's a way to show us how wonderful a person Christmas is, but like a lot of other stuff, it doesn't work. The chocolate making course Christmas attends too, is just filler and really adds nothing to the actual plot.

Maybe everything would have worked better if the book was cut up and used for another time. I think there's too much going on for the one book. Perhaps Moon would have been better off focusing on just Christmas's family and leaving Lincoln's plethora of relatives and their many issues for another time or vice versa.

I did like the Tasmanian and French settings. I love it when books make you itch to jump on a plane and visit their settings, and this was definitely the feeling I got as I read.

And as I've said, the descriptions of the chocolate were also very lovely, even if the technical aspects did get a little preachy at times (yes, I'm one of those horrid people who just buys chocolate at the grocery store, sue me).

I received this via the Reading Room and there were no obvious errors in my advanced copy (as I've seen other people mention in reviews).

I would recommend it to anyone looking for an easy weekend read that's a little more meaty than a Mills & Boon but still ultimately forgettable.

3 ½ stars.

Suzanne says

Sometimes it's nice to be immersed into a work of fiction where all the senses are tickled. *The Chocolate Promise* did this to mine, a really nice story to be swept away with over a couple of days – on holidays from my studies mind you, so I was a happy woman. It brought out all the 'girlie' in me, it was so nice!

The Tea Chest was another sweet read from this author, and I really think she has the knack of writing charming stories that appeal to readers, creative settings and clever crafts, in this instance chocolate making, and in the other book crafting tea. I wonder what Josephine Moon knows of this stuff in the real world as she seems to have a brilliant creative knowledge. I'd love to take a holiday to Tasmania and visit this shop that is the setting for this novel. It was sweet indulgence to read about coffee, flowers and the lives of pretend people behind them, I wanted to be there.

A light read, gorgeous scenery and a handsome man. What's not to love?! I appreciate quirky and down to earth reading. ***“I tried drinking chai, as per your suggestion. Totally awful. Imposter coffee. Bah!”***

I love a bit of girlie meandering and dreamy stuff. ***“‘Lincoln Van Luc’, she murmured, and automatically responded with ‘Just a little bit cute’.”***

Christmas Livingstone (yes that's her name, I wasn't bothered by it, thought it was cute and suited her personality) *enflourishes* (yes she made that one up, isn't it gorgeous?!) everything she comes across. I'd be forgiven for thinking I wanted to be her, even just for a wee while. She's clever, witty and just a little self-deprecating. As one of her customers said, about her little chocolate shop, come homewares and massage is that it was ***‘empty and bereft without you’*** while she was gone.

Bill Traves says

Chocolate a great love story with timeless characters who leap off the page what's not to love? This is even better than the tea chest but like Josephine moons first novel is impossible to put down fun and very very readable (I read in one night I hadn't planned to it was just that good) It has two of my favourite places Tasmania and France and shows the author has done a lot on research on chocolate that magical ingredient that weaves throughout the books central love story between Christmas and Lincoln. I know as a guy I shouldn't love chick lit and rom coms but I do and books like the chocolate promise is why There are so many sad dreary books out there books like the chocolate promise reinvigorate your soul! Speaking of Rom coms this would make a great movie rich settings beautiful imagery sumptuous chocolate and a wonderful collection of well fleshed out characters who make the read so much richer. Read this book you will love it a real treat for the senses. A word of warning though have some chocolate nearby. When you do want some when reading (and you will) you don't want to break up a great read with a chocolate run to the shops! Well done ms moon I will read this again and again

Margi says

I have read *The Tea Chest* by the same author and remember enjoying it. This book popped out at me as I was Easter shopping and was impressed by the book's lovely cover. This was a delightful, enjoyable and good read. The book was a pleasant mix of love, laughter, lovely characters and lastly some yummy chocolate making it very easy to read as I nibbled on a few Easter chocolates. I was after some feel good escapism and wasn't disappointed.

Veronica ?? says

After suffering a debilitating bout of depression Christmas moves back to her home town of Evandale, Tasmania. Here she happily lives her life by her ten rules of happiness. That is until Lincoln arrives in town and she has to remind herself of rule #10 absolutely no romantic relationships. Will Christmas take a chance on love even if it means breaking one of the rules that have served her well thus far?

The Chocolate Promise was a light-hearted read but the story was in no way fluffy it had meaning and substance. It raised issues of family, who we are and where we come from. There was emphasis on the modern family with step parents and half siblings, how they feel and connect. Your place in a family! Christmas had a deep desire to belong. She spent her whole life yearning for something that was right there under her nose. Christmas learnt that you can't stop living to avoid being hurt; you need to take risks to lead a full life.

Moons choice of name for the main character was risky but with so many books and ever so many characters it was a bold move to have her character remembered.

The story was well researched combining a romance that wasn't too angst ridden with the gastronomic delights of France and the beautiful scenery. The characters are engaging, believable and mostly likeable and the story wrapped up nicely with a happy and credible ending.

With thanks to Allen & Unwin for my review copy.

Lesley says

Just as fantastic as *The Tea Chest*! Perfect little love story with a great bit of chocolate history thrown in, perfect weekend read

Marianne says

The Chocolate Promise is the second novel by Australian author, Josephine Moon. Christmas Livingstone is a busy woman! She owns *The Chocolate Apothecary*, the place to go in the little Tasmanian town of Evandale for chocolate, flowers and massage. She is also the Evandale Fairy Godmother, granting wishes to needy souls. She firmly believes that chocolate has medicinal properties, so when her best friend, Emily

manages to win for Christmas a week-long scholarship with the world renowned chocolatier, Master le Coutre, in France, she knows it is an opportunity too good to miss.

But it also represents a chance to find the French father she has never met, and Christmas is ambivalent about that. But a break from Lincoln van Luc, a gorgeous botanist who sets her heart pounding is welcome: after all, her ten rules for happiness include “no romantic relationships”, and Christmas finds herself in great danger of falling in love.

Moon gives the reader some delightful characters (Elsa is bound to be a favourite), a sweet romance, a jaunt through Tasmania, Paris and Provence, an amusing example of a Chinese whisper and lots of chocolate. Christmas does begin to irritate towards the end with her drama queen antics, as does Lincoln with his about-face moves, but they ultimately have their hearts in the right place. It is fortunate that the events of this novel all take place mid-year, as trying to separate Christmas (the character) from Christmas (the celebration) would have been confusing. The rhyming descriptions of minor characters is a cute touch.

Moon gives her characters some words of wisdom: “Being alive is a risk. You risk dying every single day. But you can’t let it stop you living. And nothing...nothing...you can do will stop death from coming eventually. So the only choice you have is to live” And some astute observations: “I always feel different when I’m overseas. There’s something very liberating about it. Like all the old definitions of yourself don’t apply because there’s no one around to insist on their own version of who you are”. This is a light-hearted, entertaining read with plenty of (mostly) mouth-watering descriptions of chocolate. With thanks to Allen & Unwin and The Reading Room for this copy to read and review.

Andrea says

I haven't read anything like this for a while, so it was a nice, sweet change of pace. There was really nothing challenging about it, unless you count the internal struggle I had in coming to terms with the main character's name, *Christmas*. If I wasn't concentrating hard enough, my brain would sometimes take me off on a Christian-Christmas tangent, before realising I was reading about character-Christmas. I enjoyed the Tasmanian setting, and of course, the chocolate.

Michael says

While there is nothing wrong with a little light hearted entertainment in our reading, i do get the feeling on occasions that authors may over do it. The Chocolate Promise is a point in question with many feel good moments in a story that does it's best not to take itself seriously. This is counteracted though by moments that had me grinding my teeth and bewildering character choices.

The story centers on Christmas Livingstone, who having had herself burn't once in love has left Sydney for her native Tasmania and is working on creating chocolate masterpieces at her shop, The Chocolate Apothecary. With 10 rules for happiness that most people would struggle with, but Christmas stringently sticks to and with her friends and family around her life is great or is it? That question will be put to the test when one day a handsome man called Lincoln walks into her shop wanting to get chocolate for his Gran. Christmas will find her rule number 10 - 'Absolutely no romantic relationships' under threat as she comes

under the allure of the botanist who wants her help with writing a book about her passion. Will she find the courage to put her heart on the line after the horrible memory of years before?

For anyone who loved Josephine Moon's debut Novel *The Tea Chest* this will be a book that you will fall in love with. For anyone else, this would hard sell for a few reasons. Firstly the main characters first name. As soon as i read it for the first time i cringed and kept recoiling every time her name came up. Secondly predictability was strong with not many of my brain cells having to be used to work out the ending well in advance. Don't get me wrong, there was a lot to like about the book with the scenes in rural Tassy and France vividly described, while Lincoln's Nan is a delightful character who wants nothing but the best for him. Lastly even someone who is not fond of Chocolate like my good self was saliving at the mouth for some after reading this and that cant be a bad thing. If you are after a joyfully light read than this may hit the spot.

Sally906 says

Last year I read Josephine Moon's debut novel *The Tea Chest* and I really, really enjoyed it – **THE CHOCOLATE PROMISE** is even better – I loved it

Christmas left the hectic life of being a PR in Sydney and a broken heart and has moved to Tasmania. What prompted this move is not revealed at the start of the story but the past has been locked away where it can't hurt anymore and now she has a new life making beautiful gourmet chocolate treats in her old-fashioned shop 'The Chocolate Apothecary'. In her spare time she acts as a fairy godmother by trying to help people who need it, such as a new washing machine for a stay at home mum with little money – and assist a gentleman to propose to the one he loves.

Life is good for Christmas then a few events shatter her carefully created equilibrium. Firstly her best friend enters her into a competition to win a week-long scholarship course with a world-renowned French chocolatier IN FRANCE!! And she discovers she has won it. Almost the very same day a good-looking botanist, Lincoln, turns up in her shop to buy chocolates for his grandmother and sets Christmas's heart pounding – as well as his. Turns out he home between jobs and is writing a book on cacao trees. His publisher thinks it may possibly be a bit dry in tone aka boring, and advises him to find a co-writer whose passion is chocolate. Well it just has to be Christmas – her passion for chocolate is extreme – her knowledge of processes not botanical surpasses just peeling off the paper and biting in. Christmas is certain there is healing property in chocolate – especially if it's mixed with essential oils and herbs. Both Lincoln and Christmas have hurt in their past – neither is looking for a relationship – but the power of chocolate works in mysterious ways and it takes a trip half way around the world before the two realise what's right in front of them.

I spent the Easter break reading this and munching dark chocolate Easter eggs and a glass, or two, of sweet fortified Tokay. Well written, well researched and with believable characters – although some were certainly oddballs. **THE CHOCOLATE PROMISE** has humour, sadness, love and misunderstandings. Then there are well-meaning friends and family determined to help the relationship along, there is also an abandoned mutt with an important part to play. I immersed myself in **THE CHOCOLATE PROMISE** and can't wait for her next one.

In a recent blog post author Josephine Moon described her books like this:

“...I like to think of my books as being like a good chocolate brownie--rich, comforting, uplifting, but with a few chunky nuts to chew on...”

And that simple statement fits both of her books perfectly.

With thanks to Allen & Unwin and the author for this copy to read and review.

Kate says

Josephine Moon's *The Chocolate Promise* is a delightful story about love, life and best of all - chocolate! Owner and founder of a artisan chocolate store in Tasmania, Christmas Livingston lives her life according to a set of rules she believes will help her live a happy life. With her career keeping her busy as well as being a fairy godmother to those in need, Christmas is too busy for love or other complications. When Lincoln, a handsome botanist, arrives on the scene, Christmas embraces the opportunity to explore his botanical link to chocolate but keeps Lincoln at arms length. Falling in love has never been one of Christmas' rules.

This book was a beautiful read. In between the decadent descriptions of Christmas' delicacies and the antics of Christmas' patrons and family members - I fell in love with the characters and the story. *The Chocolate Promise* is one of those books I didn't want to put down.

Christmas is a great character to follow as she creates her chocolate delicacies and travels the world to discover more about herself and the sweets she is so passionate about. She's creative and intelligent and best of all she loves what she does. A chocolatier with a heart of gold, Christmas could run the risk of being saccharine yet she has enough flaws to make her interesting. I loved watching her as she found her balance in life. Her family are dysfunctional and realistic with their relationships with Christmas being complicated and completely believable. Lincoln van Luc brings his own family issues to the story and some great characters along with him. His grandmother and the other residents of the Green Hills retirement home were a highlight.

The Chocolate Promise is a book where there is a romantic storyline and it is one which is handled with great care. There is a lack of predictability yet the drama surrounding possible complications not overwhelming everything else going on. At its heart, this book is about Christmas finding her place in life and finding happiness in the life she is living. The Tasmanian setting worked beautifully with the story (I could picture the *Chocolate Apothecary* perfectly in my mind) and the French chapters brought a lovely European vibe to the pages.

The Chocolate Promise is a beautiful story with engaging characters. There is a lot of heart in this story with the characters being both interesting and realistic and the descriptions being exceptionally vivid. A must read for anyone who enjoys well written, heart warming stories and has a bit of a sweet tooth.

Thanks to Allen and Unwin for the review copy.

Sharon says

Leaving behind her busy life in Sydney, Christmas Livingstone heads back to her hometown of Evandale in Tasmania. It is here where she decides to set up a chocolate shop, The Chocolate Apothecary.

Christmas takes great pleasure in creating delicious homemade chocolates for those who drops into her shop. Christmas feels her life is going well. But it's about to become a whole lot better when she finds out her best friend, Emily has won for her a week long scholarship course with a world renowned French chocolatier in France. An opportunity of a lifetime that she cannot and will not pass up.

On the day of receiving the exciting news of her coming trip to France she also has a handsome customer drop into her shop to buy chocolates for his grandmother. She quickly finds out his name is Lincoln and apart from being very good looking it seems there could be another reason why their paths have crossed.

Anyone who knows me knows that I'm a BIG chocoholic, so when I came across this book with the title of The Chocolate Promise I just had to read it. And if you were wondering if I was eating chocolate whilst reading this book YES of course I was. Anyway, back to the book, which by the way was a very enjoyable read. A light, fun and entertaining read that will have your taste buds craving chocolate. With thanks to Goodreads for my copy to read and review.

Han Le flueff says

A lovely chocolatey chick novel. After reading this I really want to visit Tasmania!

Dale Harcombe says

Three and a half stars.

Sometimes as a reader, you don't want something deep and meaningful and angst ridden. All you want from a book is a bit of fun and to be entertained, which was the way I approached The Chocolate Promise. There are so many books around that focus on the hard and traumatic aspects of life that it's good to read something that doesn't take itself seriously and that is filled with a joy for living.

The book starts with Christmas Livingstone's Top 10 rules for happiness. While I wouldn't agree with all of them and a couple I violently disagreed with, it provided a framework for the rest of the book. I liked the relationship between Christmas and other members in her complex family were portrayed. I liked the way the story travelled from Tasmania to France. It was very visual.

That's not to say there weren't a couple of things I struggled with, one being the name Christmas. It grated on me throughout. Even though it is explained late in the novel, the explanation wasn't satisfying enough for me to accept the name. Another was the assumption that people over fifty like Michael Buble. You can guess I don't. But really they are minor quibbles. The idea of a place called the Chocolate Apothecary was intriguing and I discovered a lot of interesting facts about chocolate making. I found the time spent under the tutelage (for want of a better word) of Master Le Coutre, over the top and found him a rather ridiculous character. I lost interest for a while at this point. Lincoln, the handsome botanist who knows a lot about cacao, is an interesting character and I liked the inclusion of his grandmother and others in the nursing home.

All in all, I enjoyed this book. At the time it was just what I needed, light and joyous. One warning, don't read this book if you are on a diet or trying to give up chocolate! The easiest way to sum this book up is this. If you liked The Tea Chest you should enjoy this. If you didn't as a friend of mine didn't, than don't bother with this one.

I won this as a first Read Goodreads ACR, and there are a couple of mistakes in the text that I am sure will be fixed before the proper published version comes out shortly.
