



The Secret of Happy Ever After

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Michelle doesn't believe in fairy tales. She's a hard-headed businesswoman, making a fresh start in a new town. And when she decides to take over a neglected book shop, she knows the perfect manager.

For book-loving Anna, it's a dream come true—and not just because it gives her an escape from her three demanding step-children and their adorable but hyperactive Dalmatian. Although she's been thinking that her own fairytale ending hasn't really turned out the way she hoped, Anna's passion for the classics is transforming the shop. The customers, and even Michelle, are falling under the spell of the magical stories of romance, adventure, and lost dogs.

But when secrets from her past threaten Michelle's new beginnings, and trouble strikes at the heart of Anna's household, can the wisdom and courage of the stories in the bookshop help the two friends—and those they love—find their happy ever after?

The Secret of Happy Ever After Details

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Author : Lucy Dillon

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From Reader Review The Secret of Happy Ever After for online ebook

Jelena Milenkovi? says

There was a lot of things that bothered me, including the conclusion of the story!

Claire says

This started as a really fun and mostly quite light slice of life/romance novel, set around a small town and bouncing between two POV characters, one of whom runs a homewares store and the other of whom winds up managing the bookstore next door. All the delightful wallowing in books - especially the kids books - was really great and totally up my alley, and I also really enjoyed that the author did a great job showing an existing relationship and how both parties had to work at it, rather than just building a new relationship or having it need to be blown up and replaced.

Trigger warnings:

One POV character was raped as a teenager and this comes out in the latter part of the book. It's described in flashback, so please be aware of this if you are reading and may need this warning. The same character is also recovering after having left an abusive/controlling relationship, and there was vague allusion to physical assault as well. I didn't enjoy that narrative arc at all and I think the book would have been better off without it. The author didn't handle it particularly badly, but it did feel like it was part of the character's backstory to provide drama and ~angst in the way that has been so badly overdone by so many novels (especially SF/Fantasy) and as such, I would've enjoyed this book so so much more if the author had gone a less problematic route to provide some narrative force.

I finished the book and largely enjoyed it, but the last quarter or so were definitely far tougher going. I did at least enjoy it enough to give the author another try and see if her other books can avoid the issues I had with this one.

Lisa says

Lucy Dillon - my new favourite author! This is the first of her books I have read and I will be serching out her previous ones asap!

I was captivated even before I started the story because Lucy Dillon is a woman after my own heart who mentions her love of Enid Blyton, Malory Towers, Chalet School, Ballet Shoes, Mrs Pepperpot - oh, numerous books that were the very heart of my own childhood - and of many more like us. Her knowledge and love of these childhood stories shouts from the pages and I am sure I am not the only reader who thought 'I AM Anna!'....

Anna...a dreamy librarian, struggling to be the perfect step-mother, always caught in the middle of her her own family dreams and the ready made family she has.

Michelle - brilliant business woman, steely and determined but with something dark and mysterious lurking in her past, runs a prosperous home furnishing shop and seeking to buy the shop next door for expansion

learns that to do so she must first run it as the bookshop had been. Michelle rises to the challenge and, with friend Anna's help, develops every book lovers ideal bookshop - believe me I was drooling for this bookshop!

This sets the central stage for the story but we learn, bit by bit, more about Michelle's previous life and about Anna's difficulties with her step-family and her longing for her own baby. Family features very strongly in this wonderful, touching novel. The characters are very realistic with faults and good points. Problems with children, aged parents, interfering parents, ex-partners, dogs and over sexed brothers make the story funny, witty, sad, touching and sometimes quite scarily real.

I came to really care about the characters and when we find out what Michelle's past is really about, I defy any reader not to shed a tear. I can quite honestly say that this is one of the best novels I have read. All the personal and family life details combined with the luscious memories of books that I have read and loved make this novel something really special.

Tânia says

Liked. Did not love.

I guess I could pin that down to reading 2 books in a row by the same author, but I know it had nothing to do with it.

I identified a lot with Michelle, yet I feel like I never really broke down the walls she built up around herself. **Oh, the irony is not lost on me, believe me.** I loved her relationship with Rory – she thinks he's messy, he thinks she has a "Knick-Knacks" shop - and how it evolved throughout the book!

I felt a huge sympathy for Anna. She's like this Superwoman handling everything on her own: house, chores, work, stepdaughters, dog, lazy-ass husband. Always putting everyone's needs ahead of her own. No wonder she feels like an appendix to the family. I loved her interaction with the girls but as you can tell I didn't really like the guy because **Phil, MAN-UP goddammit!**

But I think both storylines were bogged down by too much domestic drama, two unplanned pregnancies (really? one wasn't enough?!), and the old story of the perfect man in the eyes of parents vs reality.

Positive thinking: delicious writing, lovely little snippets of characters from previous books. Natalie, Rachel, George, Juliet, Lorcan, and even Coco were mentioned if I'm not mistaken. That always puts a smile on my face.

This was definitely a more character than doggie-driven book.

P.S.: She did both so well in Walking Back to Happiness.

Amy says

Nice book...nothing great, nothing bad. Ending is a bit abrupt and a little too "happily ever after". I was expecting a little more fireworks at the end. While I like kids books, the references were a bit too much of it for my tastes. I have a 9 year old daughter and sorry, in today's world, they just aren't enthralled with Little Women (and neither was I 40 years ago.) There are many many amazing books written by wonderful

children's authors today and the March sisters just aren't relatable.

SORT OF SPOILER: Seems to me that I wanted Rory and Anna together even though I knew that would not happen. Lot of stuff going on. You knew there was going to be a BIG reveal for Michelle but I'm not sure that it was effective. She had to have something bad but nothing that could have been Michelle's fault. Many unlikable family characters and I don't think I liked the way she wrapped them up. I wanted them to get their due a bit. Ended soft.

Eustacia Tan says

The Secret of Happy Ever After revolves around a bookstore. Anna is given the chance at her dream job and run a bookstore leased by her friend Michelle. In the course of the year, many events happen, and they both (predictably) come out better for it.

I think what made this book really great was Michelle. It's easy to write a book that's full of book lovers, so the inclusion of an extremely business minded person like Michelle made for a great contrast. I can actually understand her arguments, and I quite admire some of her tactics - like selling reading accessories (e.g. blankets) along with books in order to boost the profit margin.

But even though this book has a bookstore at the centre, it doesn't actually revolve around it. The main focus are the lives of Anna and Michelle. Anna wants children. Very badly. Instead, she has three (not-so) lovely stepchildren, and her husband intends to break his promise to let her try for a baby. On the other hand, Michelle is running away from her husband, who abused her emotionally.

What I liked about the book was the melding of the two things - the bookstore (which is quite clearly the catalyst for change) and the two ladies. It seems that as the bookshop flourishes (in terms of customers coming in, not sales), the two ladies lives are changed more and more. This isn't a purely bookshop book, there are books about that (I think. I haven't had the chance to read many of them), but the bookshop is prominent. Basically, I like how the bookshop is a large feature of the book.

While I have to return this book, I think I'll be keeping an eye out for it in the future, because I want a copy. After all, one of my dreams is to have my own bookshop. (My other dreams are/were to be a CEO and/or a stockbroker. Yes, I had weird dreams).

(First published at <http://www.allsortsofbooks.blogspot.c...>)

Norah Una Sumner says

Not sure how I feel about this book.

Hmm,I have a love-hate relationship with this book.I love the fact that library and books are a big part of this story,but on the other hand I don't think I really liked any of the characters.I'm quite fond of Anna,but she can be annoying sometimes.There's a lot of things I didn't like,including the ending,but I'm giving this book 3 stars because I enjoyed reading it and I loved Anna's step-children and Pongo,of course.

Things I liked:

1.) Like I said,I really liked the fact that the library and books are a big part of this story.I love all the books

that are mentioned and I also love the dogs in this story!How cute is Pongo,tho?

2.) I also like Lucy Dillon's writing style and the fact that this book has dual POV.

3.) I have to mention the fact that there is a Doctor Who reference here! *squeeee*

Things I didn't like:

1.) I didn't really like Michelle.Through the whole book I was hoping that we would see the depths of her fears but that didn't happen.I just couldn't connect with her and I didn't even like her friendship with Anna,it didn't seem real to me since Anna basically doesn't know anything about Michelle.

2.) I liked Anna but her obsession with children's books was quite annoying honestly.I understands that she likes reading but I never met a person who only read children's books and constantly cries while reading them.And it seems like everyone in their town is fond of children's books.I mean,come on,read something else.

3.) The ending.Ugh,I got really irritated at the end of this book.(view spoiler)

Overall,Comme ci,comme ça.

I'll leave you with this gif.

Favourite quotes:

“Books matter. They are an inspiration, an escape. Something bigger than we are...”

“Don't worry about what you did yesterday, he said, often, worry about what you haven't done today.”

Gurdeep Assi says

Loved this book! Great storyline with interesting characters. A Lucy Dillon novel never fails to grab you, such an enjoyable read. Highly recommended.

Mafi says

Apesar das personagens e das histórias de cada uma delas, ser uma grande atração no livro, o que eu gostei realmente foi o cenário onde a acção se desenrola. Se ao início o foco era apenas a loja de Michelle, a partir do momento em que entra no espaço, a livraria da Anna, o enredo torna-se muito melhor. Porque tudo é muito melhor com livros, e um livro sobre livros é quase perfeito.

opinião completa - <http://cronicasdeumaleitora.blogspot...>

Maria says

Um romance fofinho que termina da forma que imaginamos quase desde as 1^{as} paginas, mas à vezes sabe bem ler um livro assim, que não nos dê muito que pensar... Podia ser um pouco mais pequeno, não era preciso ser tão longo pois tive a sensação de que a escritora estava a fazer render o peixe mas foi sem duvida uma leitura agradável.

Marta A. Santos says

Um livro doce, emotivo, arrebatador e reconfortante..
Uma história de amor e de amizade no seu melhor com um ambiente maravilhoso que só uma livraria nos pode transmitir.

Patrícia says

Gosto de um bom livro aconchegante. De uma história que se destaque pela beleza da escrita e pelas imensas voltas e reviravoltas do enredo, mas que, no final, me deixe com um sorriso perpétuo nos lábios. Acima de tudo, gosto de percorrer vivências incompletas que buscam, fervorosamente, aquele pedacinho de felicidade, de aceitação, de conforto que, demasiadas vezes, vemos escapar-nos das mãos. Este livro é assim... purificante, enternecedor, um autêntico bálsamo para a alma.

Segredos para um final feliz é, definitivamente, um romance de pormenores, de vidas que, embora não perfeitas, nunca perfeitas, são comuns, e, por isso, deixam uma marca, uma réstia de esperança, um consolo para todos aqueles que desistem ao primeiro obstáculo, que se resignam com um «não» e que, muitas vezes, se renunciam de procurar o que os faz feliz.

Lucy Dillon foi uma estreia profundamente avassaladora. A sua escrita é pontuada por uma beleza e ritmo incríveis, sustentando-se ora na essência dos problemas que as suas protagonistas vivem e encontram, ora na complexidade que o próprio futuro, e também o presente, acarreta. As suas descrições são de se louvar aos céus e a magnitude que confere a cada personagem, aperfeiçoando os detalhes, esculpindo as várias facetas, é absolutamente cativante.

O começo de cada capítulo, em Segredos para um final feliz, é como um novo despertar literário para todas aquelas narrativas que outrora conhecemos, e todas aquelas figuras que, com certeza, viremos a descobrir mais para a frente, numa compilação de pequenos cartões, pequenas recordações e pedaços de memórias, sugestões, não só dos próprios intervenientes ficcionais do enredo em si, como, e atrevo-me a dizer, do gosto pessoal da autora—algo que acho magnífico. Mas uma verdadeira história de encantar, para leitores experientes, tem obrigatoriamente de possuir um leque interessante de personagens, e este romance, sem dúvida, transborda excelência também nesse aspecto.

Anna e Michelle captaram por completo a minha atenção. Os constantes dilemas que a primeira enfrenta, e o seu forte desejo de ser mãe, assim como o passado turbulento que a segunda se esforça por esconder por detrás de uma personalidade mais rígida e controladora, são situações, pessoas, que facilmente poderiam existir no meu círculo de amigos. Presenciar o desenvolvimento e desabrochar de ambas, através das suas paixões e medos, foi indiscutivelmente mágico, e ainda sentir a companhia de outras presenças singulares como Pongo e Tavish—adorei a abordagem canina da autora—, as irmãs Lily, Chloe e Becca—de feitios tão distintos—ou até o próprio Owen, Rory ou Evelyn, foi como a cereja no topo de um bolo já incrivelmente

apetitoso.

Um livro especial, construído de afectos, é como vejo Segredos para um final feliz. Não estou certa de que contenha, por entre as suas muitas páginas, e pelo menos não abertamente, a fórmula secreta para o eterno happy ending que todos nós buscamos, mas acredito, e isso sim, que, com as várias mensagens que transmite e os diversos ensinamentos que oferece, indica o princípio absolutamente necessário, a abertura imprescindível, para a sobrevivência a uma vida que, nem sempre, é justa ou fácil. Mas, estar-se vivo é isso mesmo, é chorar com os amigos, sorrir com a família, descontrair com aquilo de que mais gostamos e, claro, reconciliarmo-nos com a ajuda ao outro que, muitas vezes, demasiadas vezes, fica esquecida.

Gostei particularmente das existências paralelas ao enredo principal que a autora, Dillon, tão sabiamente vai reproduzindo um pouco ao longo de toda a história. A Butterfields, por exemplo, e tudo o que ela significa enquanto instituição, marcou-me sobremaneira. É deveras poderoso assistir, ainda que superficialmente, à solidão insistente sentida em idade mais avançada, quando a nossa mente e o nosso corpo já não funcionam em uníssono, e quando a responsabilidade que antes sabíamos ter por nós mesmos deixou, simplesmente de existir. Enterneceu-me a percepção que Michelle acabou por retirar deste casulo exteriormente belíssimo, e o modo como essa destreza de pensamento, com o tempo, se foi materializando numa mudança (gradual) de atitude e confiança, que, por sua vez, culminou numa renovada, e mais aberta, personalidade errante. Mas também Anna aprendeu com as pessoas à sua volta, com as gravidezes constantes, com os comportamentos indisciplinados e com as incontáveis sensações desconfortáveis por se «estar a mais» ou «se ser dispensável»—e isso faz-me pensar: não foi bonita a forma como cada peça, no final, acabou por encaixar no seu devido lugar?

Opinião completa, em:

<http://pedacinho-literario.blogspot.p...>

Rebecka says

Mysig bok med en gnutta romantik och värme. Och mycket kärlek till böcker som får en bokmal som mig att må bra :-)

Amanda says

I would have given this novel two stars, but for the delicate way Dillon presented being a stepmother, and feeling as though you are a bit part in your own story. Really effectively done, and particularly poignant for me as I find myself in this position these days.

What failed to light this novel up was the balance. There wasn't masses of plot to begin with, but it was stretched so thoroughly over 450 pages that it became thin, and then everything was tied up with neat ribbons in just a few pages, comparatively. Also, we were told a lot that Phil was not a good person, that he wasn't acting as a father and husband should - to the point where I actively disliked him; then we were asked to disregard all of that for the sake of the happy ever after ending. It felt very contrived.

It should be borne in mind that Dillon is one of those authors who have improved immeasurably since her early novels. Although I can't really recommend this novel by her, do, do, do pick up her later novels once she found her stride and her voice more thoroughly. She is an excellent writer, but this wasn't the best

example of that.

Mariazita says

E tão bom leres livros assim, cheios de ternura, com personagens simpáticas e também os de quatro patas:)
Muito bom.
