



Adore

Doris Lessing

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Two friends, two sons, two shocking and intense love affairs . . .

Roz and Lil have been best friends since childhood. But their bond stretches beyond familiar bounds when these middle-aged mothers fall in love with each other's teenage sons—taboo-shattering passions that last for years, until the women end them, vowing to have a respectable old age. With *Adore*, Doris Lessing, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, once again proves her unrivaled ability to capture the truth of the human condition.

Adore Details

Date : Published September 17th 2013 by Harper Perennial (first published 2003)

ISBN : 9780062318978

Author : Doris Lessing

Format : ebook 112 pages

Genre : Fiction, Short Stories, Romance, Novella, Family, Contemporary

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Elizabeth says

For a book that deals with such a taboo subject, it was surprisingly dull. I wasn't expecting, and didn't want, graphic scenes, but some emotional depth would have been nice. Allow me to sum up the book and save you the trouble.

Roz: Hey, Lil, your sad, creepy son crawled into my bed last night and I think we did it. Now my son is all upset. Lend a hand?

Lil: K.

Years later.

Roz: I think it's time for our respective sons/boy toys to conform to societal expectations and find some disappointing girls to marry.

Lil: Boo.

Roz: Yeah. Still...

Lil: K.

A few years later.

Disappointing Girl: I know all of your secrets! Amazingly, I am not okay with it!

Lil: Oh.

Roz: LOL?

Bluebell says

I get the impression that in Doris Lessing's writing nothing that happens is of much consequence but is rather just a passing observation on the nature of man.

But the film is great, hey!

Erin says

You know when you read the summary of a book and think it should be rather interesting, but then as you start reading you are left utterly disappointed? That's Adore.

Roz and Lil are childhood friends who end up falling in love with each other's sons. It sounds like it should be interesting albeit gross and wrong on every level, right?

The writing throughout this was so dull that I didn't even get to know the characters beyond that they were sleeping with each other's sons. Everything was written so matter of fact that I felt like I was reading a catalog or something rather than a short story. I was left very disappointed for what could have been an interesting short story.

Sasti says

A solid 3.5.

Interesting writing style. It was almost like a quiet pensive person having a go at retelling the events from a distant almost hazy memory. It was filled with afterthoughts and clarifications in one sentence. Everything was *s l o w*. Much more stylized than regular colloquial speech.

Anyway.

I picked this up because I saw the movie a few months ago. And I've been trying to find something to pass the time during my long bus rides, and this was still in my library after only dnf-ing it after 2 pages. This time around, I finished it rather quickly, but I remember the movie being much more emotionally tense but the soft quiet kind, the kind that is thick and heavy and just sits in the air; engulfing everyone in it. Everyone is aware of it, but doesn't speak of it. I was expecting the book to be like this too, but cinema just has an easier time with portraying this with sound and lighting. So, when I first started reading the book the juxtaposition from the movie to the book probably put me off the book, but honestly it's not bad..

Onto the review:

It's essentially a love story between two best friends and their young sons. One thing that bothered me about this was the fact that the boys were still in high school when this affair started. Maybe 16 years old? Maybe it's because I'm from the States but hello: MINORRRRRSSS, they're minors!!!!!! The legal age here is 18 so that realllllyyy put me off it. I do know in some counties it's 16, but still.

I have to say the author does a decent enough job of not making this awkward. There is a somewhat natural progression of love, but honestly a lot of this is using your inferencing skills--filling in the gaps of what isn't said; reading in between the lines. Some authors will explain every little detail, but here she just explains an event and you're supposed to fill in the gaps. The transitions weren't the best, but nothing too horrible. This was a short story after all, not a full on novel.

Also it's an open ended ending, which I didn't mind. Everything about this book was mediocre, there are just so many better heterosexual normative books out there that I don't really know why you would read this...Especially when everything about this book was so freaking obvious. Ofc there was going to be an exposition, rising action, and a climax. (view spoiler)Although, interestingly enough the book starts off with a the climax, and as i said earlier, it has an open ending there's no falling action to speak of.

I should also mention this story has such a **l a c k** of diversity. All the characters are white, and either rich or upper middle class. The antagonist in the story is the girl with dark hair...okay... A literal dark force that popped their happy little bubble and making their picturesque little lives fall to pieces.

Over all it was okay, but I would recommend the movie over the book. Any day of the week

Ladyce West says

Fiquei surpresa com a persistência das imagens dançando na minha imaginação dias após a leitura de *AS AVÓS* de Doris Lessing [Cia das Letras: 2007]. Por um tempo não sabia exatamente o que dizer sobre o livro além de recomendá-lo enfaticamente. Tudo tem seu tempo. Às vezes as idéias precisam amadurecer. De repente, ZÁZ!, veio o ponto de encaixe: uma conversa sem agenda, com uma amiga. Entre um cafezinho e outro ela disse que lia para ser apresentada a mundos e pessoas que jamais conheceria na vida real. Sentia-se assim enriquecida pela leitura. A meta era expandir seu conhecimento sobre outros seres humanos. Nada de extraordinário, mas foi a chave, para a introdução a esta resenha. Sim, isso me aconteceu com a leitura de *AS AVÓS*: uma ligeira mutação da norma comportamental e fiquei intrigada o suficiente para não deixar o tema de lado.

A sinopse do romance, que na verdade não é nada mais do que um conto alongado, ou uma novela, é simples, e reproduzo-a aqui como aparece nos sites de venda para facilitar a resenha. “Roz e Lil são amigas inseparáveis desde a infância. Cresceram, casaram, tiveram filhos, e vivem na paradisíaca bacia de Baxter, um lugar cercado de rochas por todos os lados. O ambiente protegido, “bocejante”, além do qual o “verdadeiro oceano rugia e roncava”, é o cenário ideal para uma relação cada vez mais simbiótica. Morando em casas vizinhas, elas criam os filhos por conta própria – e eles se tornam adolescentes encantadores. Tão encantadores e próximos, que Roz e Lil não tardam a se envolver uma com o filho da outra. Num efeito ambíguo e desconcertante, típico da grande literatura, o que poderia parecer repulsivo é tratado com naturalidade e bom-humor, fazendo a quebra de tabus soar como regra, e não como dramática exceção. Temas como a amizade, maternidade e sexualidade ganham novos contornos enquanto Doris Lessing esmiúça as complexidades e armadilhas da forte ligação entre essas duas mulheres, e retrata a força com que elas confrontam as convenções familiares e sociais de sua época.”

O romance gera perguntas cujas respostas são difíceis de encontrar. Estamos diante de diversos tipos de amor. Há o amor narcisista: Roz e Lil -- que até se parecem fisicamente, ainda que, quando adultas, tenham personalidades e profissões diversas -- vêm a si mesmas na outra, desde pequenas, desde os bancos da primeira escola. E nos questionamos: estaremos sempre à procura de nós mesmos nos nossos pares? São os pontos em comum que temos com eles o que nos une? É o narcisismo a força vital do amor fraternal? Você gosta de seus amigos pelo que eles refletem de você neles? E na paixão o mesmo acontece?

As vidas de Roz e Lil são de um paralelismo impressionante, mas não raro entre amigos. Observo à minha volta: amigos se casaram em datas próximas, tiveram filhos mais ou menos ao mesmo tempo, permaneceram, quando puderam, nos mesmos bairros, trocaram de casa à mesma época e assim por diante. O paralelismo no romance, no entanto, é tão perfeito que de fato as vidas retratadas parecem mais especiais, porque são como imagens refletidas num espelho.

No mundo das artes e das antiguidades, há uma diferença considerável de valor no par de objetos considerados “par verdadeiro”. Paga-se mais, muito mais, quando, por exemplo, num par de vasos – cada vaso aparece com a decoração invertida (da direita para a esquerda e/ou vice-versa), como se girassem num eixo vertical imaginário. Esses são chamados “pares verdadeiros”, ao contrário de um par simplesmente composto por dois vasos exatamente iguais. Aqui também. O par, formado por Roz e Lil parece muito mais interessante porque elas são diferentes, têm gostos diferentes, maridos diferentes, e até seus filhos têm um comportamento diferente. E no entanto, são iguais, são simbióticas, elas se completam a tal ponto de não considerarem morar longe uma da outra.

Através do romance o tema da homossexualidade permanece palpável, endereçado aqui e ali, sem

compromisso, mas latente. Tão forte é a simbiose entre as amigas que um dos maridos se divorcia porque se sente em segundo plano. Mas elas escapam dessa identificação, relacionando-se, ao contrário, com seus respectivos filhos. E de novo, temos o espelho. Narciso mete sua cara... Saturno comendo seus próprios filhos também... Mas não há nada de imoral nesse relacionamento, nada saturnal, no sentido de orgia. Longe disso, a implicação de imoralidade está com o leitor apenas, deparando-se com um comportamento fora dos padrões. Amoral? Não há incesto. Não são seus filhos... E voltamos à questão do amor, de Narciso: será que elas gostam de ver nos rapazes aquilo de que gostam nas amigas?

O mundo se fecha para eles, ou melhor, eles se fecham para o mundo, como se o amor fosse hermafrodita, auto-devorador, auto-consumido. Vivem numa realidade hermética, como num processo alquímico. Respiram, ganham novas vidas, vicejam no ambiente fechado que criaram, cegos para o mundo exterior. Os quatro se bastam, se saciam, se fartam. Por quanto tempo? Anos. Muitos anos. Mas a natureza é entrópica e os rapazes, quase ao mesmo tempo, se casam... Não se casam com qualquer jovem. Eles, que são melhores amigos, se casam com duas melhores amigas. E o processo parece poder continuar. Parece cheio de possibilidades infinitas... Espelhos refletindo espelhos.

Não há como não se tentar definir o amor depois da leitura de *AS AVÓS*. As experiências extremas retratadas na novela nos são familiares e por isso mesmo têm tanto efeito no leitor. Quem já teve um amigo de infância chegado, aquele ou aquela com quem dividia todos os segredos, pode ter beirado uma situação semelhante à descrita no texto. Quem já se apaixonou reconhece, no círculo fechado dos amantes alheios ao mundo exterior, a sensação de saciedade que acompanha a paixão consumida. Talvez seja por causa da familiaridade dessas emoções que essas 104 páginas de prosa consigam permanecer vivas por tanto tempo... Consigam parecer tão relevantes. Tenham tanto impacto.

Brian says

I imagine that if a reader's first Vonnegut was *Galapagos* they might wonder what all the fuss was about - so Proustite's warning about this being a lesser Lessing, as well as many trusted GR friends' accolades of her other works, I'm fully prepared to say I just got unlucky on choosing this novella (republished as a one-off, as I learned from Prou that this is one of the four novellas from *The Grandmothers*) as my DL starter.

The characters, the idea for the story, the dialogue and pacing - not much of it worked for me at all. And then there were a few of these clunkers:

And alone, she felt uneasiness, and, indeed, awe. It was mad his demand on her. It really did seem that he had refused to think she might grow old. Mad! But perhaps lunacy is one of the great invisible wheels that keep our world turning.

I'm not about to give up on Lessing - and I'll take Prou's advice and read her work from the 60s / 70s as my next sampling.

Alex says

The problem with female friends is that you always run the risk of your sons fucking them, Doris Lessing

points out. *Adore*, originally published as *The Grandmothers* in a 2003 collection of novellas, is about one of those all-too-frequent occurrences: two lifelong friends have affairs with each other's sons.

It's *good*: I liked reading it and it's got things to say about female friendship and sortof the dangers of mothers in general. I read it as sortof a corrective to the old, boring story about old men fucking younger women. Those stories are lame wish-fulfillment; this story is not. One expects Doris Lessing to be smarter than Philip Roth, and she is.

Sheri says

I love Doris Lessing. I love Doris Lessing. I have only read two of her works (this and *Fifth Child*), but she is so amazingly and beautifully fucked up that I simply need more.

I have requested the movie version (because I also adore Naomi Watts) from the library and am looking forward to seeing this onscreen.

This book is revolting. 100% completely disgusting. As a mother of a 13 year old boy (and a 38 year old woman), I am completely and totally against the self serving nature of these spoiled 30-something women. The repulsive-incest-abusive-ness of the relationship between these four is absolutely disgusting.

And yet, I love them. I want to be them. I wish I had a best friend with whom I was so close that my husband was jealous. I want to sleep with her beautiful 17 year old son. I want him to see me as the ultimate woman. I want to ruin his life and his sexuality because of my own egoism.

And, of course I am disgusted by them and my own reaction to them. And that is why I absolutely love Doris Lessing.

And so I watched the movie this afternoon...it is an okay movie (probably about 3 stars). Rather slow and at times boring. Unfortunately it is loosely based on the story. Yes, it follows the general outline, but absolutely none of the details are right. And this story so relies on those details. I would advise skipping the movie and spending an extra 15 minutes or so and just enjoy the book.

twiinklex says

"Liz said to Roz she was so happy it made her afraid. 'How could anything possibly be as wonderful?' she whispered, afraid to be overheard - by whom? No one was anywhere near. What she meant was, and Roz knew she did, that such an intense happiness must have its punishment."

Oh geez, I don't know how I feel about this book exactly. I wasn't expecting to like it but the further I read on, the more I got sucked in. And it's a very unique book because it was sooo taboo without an ounce of sleaze or any sexual scenes/descriptions. The writing style is also very different from what I'm used to as the author uses A LOT of commas.

I wouldn't have minded a longer book but funnily, at the same time, I think the length was just nice.

Now I wanna watch the movie ?

DeeLee says

It's funny how I so often end up unintentionally reading books with the same theme. I recently finished Zoë Heller's *What Was She Thinking?* [Notes on a Scandal], which also centres around inappropriate relationships between older women and young men. And then I picked this story up because it's been made into an Australian film, and I try to read the original before seeing the movie. Having read this and *Notes*, I think this is the better work.

The story (it's labelled a novella, but it's really a short story, about 60 pages) has an unsettling premise, no doubt about it. Icky, even - two mothers take the other's son for a lover.

I've seen some professional critics describe this story as being an exploration of the oedipal complex. But that's a lazy analysis, and it's not even accurate. We don't know what, if any, complexes might be motivating the sons, because we are only privy to their thoughts and feelings after the relationships are well established. In the beginning, the story focuses on the mothers, and it's all about their motivations. *Adore* doesn't explore anything as ho-hum and pedestrian as Freudian insights. It's quite a bit more interesting than that.

I came across a statistic once that reported on how most women apparently experience greater emotional intimacy with their female friends than with their husbands. I don't know if that statistic is true or not, but *Adore* is an example of the phenomenon.

Roz and Lil's friendship runs deep. So deep that it bothers Roz's husband, Harold, who feels excluded. He feels "like a sort of shadow", compared to Lil, and knows he will always come second. It's enough to ruin Harold and Roz's otherwise good relationship. Later, when both women are single, the husbands are gone but they aren't really missed.

The marital relationships were auxiliary to the main relationship, which was always between Roz and Lil. One gets the sense that they never needed or wanted anyone else, except for the fact that they are both heterosexual. As a way to close the loop between them, Roz and Lil take as a lover the man who is most similar to her friend - her son. It's almost logical in its own disturbing way. The crux of this story is formed by the intersection of profound friendship, and how a mother's child is seen as an extension of herself.

There are consequences, of course. Devastating consequences. In a way, the sons have been ruined for other women. It affects their own marriages, and we see a kind of repetition - the sons' wives sense that there is a part of their husbands' lives that will always remain out of reach and unknowable. There are echoes of the dissatisfaction that Harold felt regarding his marriage to Roz. Eventually everything is revealed to the wives, and they declare that they will excise Roz and Lil from their own children's lives (Roz and Lil's grandchildren). This isn't a spoiler since it occurs in the first scene.

And that's why I'm giving *Adore* three stars only, because that's all we get. The story ends at the most interesting part, leaving so many unanswered questions. Everything builds up so well that it's frustrating as a reader to be left hanging. This story almost reads like the first act of a longer work, and I wish it were so.

I don't know if it was intentional, but *Adore* also raises some class implications for me. As far as literature is concerned, the sexual transgressions of the poor are criminal, but the sexual transgressions of the rich are *yawn* the stuff of Art and Liberation (yes De Sade, I'm glaring at you). This story is set in a seaside idyll (apparently in South Africa, though that's not obvious from the text), among relaxed, blonde, smiling people. The characters are buffered from any material threat or concern, and that's largely why they can sit around on

a beach thinking thoughts like this:

The women stared at these two young heroes, their sons, their lovers, these beautiful young men, their bodies glistening with sea water and sun oil, like wrestlers from an older time.

Ultimately, my reaction to this story is mixed. It's unsettling, but undeniably interesting. I read it a few days ago, and I'm still thinking about it. It's rare for such a short work to hang around in my thoughts, so Lessing must be doing something right. I feel as if I have to let this one simmer for a while, and then read it again, as it seems like the kind of work where the second reading produces a completely different reaction in the reader. If I do read it again, I will update this review accordingly.

Cherie says

A- Quick read - read it in a night. This novella is the powerful story about how two women - best friends - fall in love with each other's sons. Excellent writing, and a page turner.

Marianne says

Een idyllische kuststad met, zo lijkt het, alleen maar mooie, rijke en gelukkige mensen. Ziedaar, het landschap waarin Doris Lessing haar personages neerzet.

Wat op het eerste gezicht dus een sprookjesachtig verhaal lijkt te worden draait wel anders uit.

Lil en Roz zijn al hun hele leven hartsvriendinnen, samen opgegroeid in een welvarend milieu, zorgeloos genietend van zon en zee en alle goede dingen van het leven.

Samen naar de kleuterschool, doorheen hun puberjaren en universiteit tot ze onvermijdelijk, zoals ook van hen wordt verwacht trouwen en hun eigen leven gaan leiden.

Echter nooit verder dan een paar meter van elkaar, in over elkaar staande huizen, kabbelt hun leven verder. Ze krijgen allebei een zoon die op hun beurt een even hechte vriendschap hebben voor elkaar.

Wanneer de echtgenoten, om verschillende redenen uit het beeld verdwijnen, Lil's echtgenoot verongelukt en de man van Roz vertrekt alleen naar een nieuwe job omdat Roz Lil niet kan verlaten, bouwt de spanning op. Tijdens een zomer dat de twee vrouwen en hun zonen samen als het ware één familie vormen, voel je hoe de relatie tussen de vier verandert. Er gebeuren dingen die bepaalt niet tot het gewone behoren wanneer de vriendinnen een verhouding beginnen met elkaars zonen. Die verhouding wordt niet bewust bedacht maar ze 'gebeurt' gewoon.

De crisis begint wanneer de vrouwen besluiten dat de jonge mannen moeten trouwen met jonge vrouwen en de relaties stopzetten.

Pas als Tom en Ian getrouwd zijn en kinderen hebben blijkt hoe sterk de band is met de oudere vrouwen en hoeveel normaler ze die vinden dan met hun eigen vrouwen.

Met dit verhaal begaf Lessing, een feministe pur sang, zich op glas ijs. Immers geeft ze haar personages de meest geheime passies mee, en de emotionele rugzak die de vrouwen de jongens meegeven zorgt er voor dat ze ongeschikt zijn voor relaties met leeftijdgenoten. Gezien in het licht van de seksuele tolerantie van de zestiger en zeventiger jaren klopt deze novelle wel, het decor daarentegen is voor mij net een beetje té veel roze, te veel 'the rich and famous' gekleurd om geloofwaardig te zijn.

Maar alleen al voor de manier waarop Doris Lessing de lezer meeneemt in de spanning van de relaties is het meer dan de moeite om deze novelle te lezen. Weinig auteurs kruipen zo in de huid van hun personages en leggen de geheimste verlangens bloot.

Het boek werd in 2003 uitgebracht als 'The Grandmothers' en vertaalt naar het Nederlands als 'De Grootmoeders'. Dit verhaal werd ook verfilmd met als titel 'Two mothers' en met Naomi Watts en Robin

Wright in de hoofdrol.

Jean says

Grands-mères, de Doris Lessing, est un très court roman (ou une grosse nouvelle) qui se déroule en Australie. On y suit sur plusieurs décennies la relation fusionnelle entre deux femmes, devenues mères puis grand-mères, chacune prenant pour amant le fils de l'autre. Une histoire incestueuse très troublante, écrite avec beaucoup de pudeur par une écrivaine qui fut prix Nobel de littérature. Ce livre a été adapté au cinéma il y a quelques années par la française Anne Fontaine, qui a tourné, dans un coin paradisiaque d'Australie, un film magnifique avec Naomi Watts et Robin Wright (**Adore**, titre en VO, ou **Perfect Mothers**, titre en France).

Courtney Hurley says

I wish there were a rating somewhere between "it was ok" and "I liked it."

Having never previously read this author, I was captivated by the writing; poetic and really beautifully descriptive, without being tiresome. I don't usually read short stories, but the unique plot caught my eye, and I ended up reading the entire book in less than a couple hours, before even leaving the bookstore. The storyline progresses at a pretty rapid pace. Maybe something plot-wise (which I can't quite put my finger on) was slightly underdeveloped, or maybe it's just my inexperience with the brevity of short stories, but I definitely turned the last page wishing there was a little more.

Either way, the un-comfy storyline is one that will stay with me for a while, which I always consider to be a good thing, and I'm very curious as to how the movie will compare (the sex scenes probably much more lascivious than what amount to mere insinuations in the book).

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

Roz and Lil have been best friends since their parents moved to the same neighborhood when they were children. They went to college together, dated together, got married in a double wedding ceremony, bought houses across the street from each other and had their sons at the same time. Now they are in their 30s, each with a teenage son and find themselves single (albeit for different reasons). The beauty of their respective sons first finds the women in a conundrum of forbidden attraction and eventually committing the ultimate taboo with affairs that last for years.

Full disclosure here – I was stuck at work during my lunch hour yesterday so I decided to run down the street to the library around 2:00. I sent an e-mailing detailing where I was going and when I would be back. One of my smart a\$\$ bosses replied (to all, of course) that I was going to the library to check out pornography. Har-dee-har-har. I came back with “Adore” to show him that, yes, I do check out my porn from the library, but I make sure it is porn written by a Nobel Prize winner ;)

So, there's the story of how I ended up reading “Adore”. As it turns out, I really loved this short story. I have

never read Doris Lessing before, but now realize I probably should. She writes beautifully and told a tale that should be so shocking/disturbing/stomach-turning in the most polite way possible. If you are looking for some raunchy sex scenes, this is not your book (note - it's also a movie and I have a feeling that the film version might get the blood flowing a bit). If you are looking for a story about forbidden love and its consequences, this is a good choice. Only complaint – it's a novella. I loved the characters and wanted moremoremoremoremore.
