



The Color of Tea

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An exciting debut novel set in the exotic, bustling streets of coastal China—a woman whose life is restored when she opens a small café and gains the courage to trust what’s in her heart.

Macau: the bulbous nose of China, a peninsula and two islands strung together like a three-bead necklace. It was time to find a life for myself. To make something out of nothing. The end of hope and the beginning of it too.

After moving with her husband to the tiny, bustling island of Macau, Grace Miller finds herself a stranger in a foreign land—a lone redhead towering above the crowd on the busy Chinese streets. As she is forced to confront the devastating news of her infertility, Grace’s marriage is fraying and her dreams of family have been shattered. She resolves to do something bold, something her impetuous mother would do, and she turns to what she loves: baking and the pleasure of afternoon tea.

Grace opens a café where she serves tea, coffee, and *macarons*—the delectable, delicate French cookies colored like precious stones—to the women of Macau. There, among fellow expatriates and locals alike, Grace carves out a new definition of home and family. But when her marriage reaches a crisis, secrets Grace thought she had buried long ago rise to the surface. Grace realizes it’s now or never to lay old ghosts to rest and to begin to trust herself. With each mug of coffee brewed, each cup of tea steeped and *macaron* baked, Grace comes to learn that strength can be gleaned from the unlikeliest of places.

A delicious, melt-in-your-mouth novel featuring the sweet pleasures of French pastries and the exotic scents and sights of China, *The Color of Tea* is a scrumptious story of love, friendship and renewal.

The Color of Tea Details

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From Reader Review The Color of Tea for online ebook

Marcie Lovett says

I think the author got paid a bonus each time she used the word "macaron." Not only was I tired of hearing about macarons in every other sentence, I wasn't impressed with the writing style. The main character is unsympathetic and the other characters aren't well developed. The plot is unbelievable and wraps up too neatly in the end.

Can't recommend this one.

Elaine says

I confess I generally cut debut novels quite a lot of slack, because the writers are first-time authors and really shouldn't be judged on the same scale as more veteran ones, who've learned the pitfalls to avoid. With that caveat, I upped *The Color of Tea* to two stars. I actually didn't like it, but it had two things going for it: the story made me care for the protagonist and the setting of Macau for this novel was genuinely evocative.

The story surrounds middle-aged Grace Miller who finds herself with her husband ensconced in Macau as expatriates. They have been trying to conceive for a long time without any success, and the stress of that has leached joy out of their sexual congress and bliss out of their marriage. Grace, a former waitress with apparently little proven skill or professional training in anything, begins to turn her mind to opening a cafe in Macao when an opportunity presents itself, with a little help from a professional chef, Leon, whom she also begins to develop unruly feelings for. When the cafe opens, women begin to enter Grace's life, from the Filipino help -- Rilla -- that Leon finds for her, to Gigi, the granddaughter of one of the cafe's Chinese patrons, Yok Lan, a smart-mouth, tres chic, local Chinese girl who can speak English. Then, there is Marjorie, a former dancer and another patron of the cafe, who becomes embroiled more than she bargained for in the plights of Filipino helpers in Macao, who are frequently taken advantage of, not only by the agencies who squirrel them over to Hong Kong and Macao, but also the frequently tyrannical employers who hire them and abuse them with frying pans. So, there are lots of lively characters to work with here. The plot moves along swiftly enough with all these walk-on characters and there is a kind of plot momentum when we witness Grace's marriage biodegrade from the trials of infertility, unspoken hurts and the ghosts of the past, together with the strains that come from both of them working hours that only seem to push them to become ships passing in the night.

The setting is Macau is carefully evoked, and having lived in Hong Kong for a few years, many of the details were very accurately and interestingly drawn. It brought back quite a few memories for me. They also felt true in the way that only someone who has lived in Hong Kong or that area of the world will know, such as the quality of the sun and air, the dealings between expatriates and Filipino help, the insidious and callous racism often demonstrated by expatriates in the us-versus-them general tone of conversation. It's one of these things that are so pervasive that to do what Grace did to Linda -- telling her to 'piss off' often gets you labelled as iconoclastic, eccentric, or worse, one of those guilty-hypocritical-liberals who talk the talk but do not walk the walk. These were all things I observed in the shallowly capitalistic megalopolis of Hong Kong, and also the unacknowledged support band for its continuous prosperity. The Hong Kong Government is laissez-faire in all things, including labor safety and protection.

But there are some pitfalls in this book and I name them here. I name them here because I think that they are pitfalls a debut writer can easily fall into (and I a, guilty of some of them in my own first novel).

1. When a protagonist has lived for a certain amount of time in your head, she takes on certain main characteristics that can get overemphasized and become tiresome in the novel. E.g. In *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the oft-cited reference is to the usage of "oh my" by the protagonist whenever she comes to a pivotal emotional moment. Here, while not quite as blatantly unskillful, there are too many occasions describing the protagonist getting up in the morning, or after having just gotten up, or about to go to bed.

2. Character development. Granted, the plot of the book seemed to only allow the husband and wife to meet in the battlefield of the bed, but there were also episodes where they were together which potential was left unmined in my opinion. Grace's way of dealing with things is very passive. When confronted with her husband's unreasonable accusations of adultery, and then his self-confessed sex with a prostitute, her way of dealing is basically not to deal. There is no confrontation other than flung words of "I can't stand the sight of you". Then, when her anger passes, she simply seems to take him back without any proper reckoning.

3. Plot development. Things just seem to happen very easily in this novel. Almost glossed over in fact. I can't imagine opening a cafe in Macau when you speak not a lick of Cantonese can be as breezy as it has appeared in this novel. In the space of two or three pages, Grace has managed to get a cafe open. From a woman without any experience doing any of this, and who was literally unable to get out of bed, I just find it really hard to believe that she was as unruffled as she seems to be over the entire cafe opening, from the moment of idea generation to execution. I'm not sure whether this is lack of research, laziness, or that the initial amount of detail overwhelmed the novel and so she was advised to take it out. But regardless, there should be some balance. I'm the kind of reader that wants to get into the meat of things. I want to get into the heart of the novel, be in it for the duration, good or bad. I do not like to be told that "She had an idea to open a cafe". Then two pages later, the cafe opened.

Next, without so much as a glitch, the cafe takes off. Without any serious marketing on Grace's part. Without her doing any promos. Without the usual business difficulties and start-up issues that confront every entrepreneurial effort. A typhoon does come and destroy the interior of the cafe, but even this seems bleached of any real terror or emotional uprising in the protagonist. All in all, she's either as bland as vanilla or as passive as a schoolbus waiting for the kids to be let out of school.

4. The Ending. Without giving the ending away, I am astounded that this ending was acceptable to the editors involved. Really, you can make that kind of swap? Isn't it illegal? Aren't there plenty of legalities to get through, none of which was even remotely mentioned. And last but not least, Gigi's motivation for the swap is simply breathtakingly bizarre. I simply cannot buy the absolute lack of maternal love on her part, not when she's been painted to be such an upright character. It's like a bad macaron. It leaves a really bad taste in the mouth. What happened here? I would wager that when there hasn't been enough character development, the ending doesn't suggest itself, and this might be one of those cases when the book needed to conclude, but it's not clear how.

5. Also every chapter had a macaron chapter heading. A name for an exotically created macaron such as plum and hibiscus with chocolate ganache or cinnamon with dark chili chocolate ganache. I would have loved for this book to be more *Like Water for Chocolate* here. Actually provide a recipe. It would leave the reader with something more substantial than just a wisp of exotic food names. Either that or actually describe the process of Grace making macarons. The only thing we ever get a direct glimpse of is her staring into the oven as the shells rise and inflate. We don't get a single description of her actually going through the labor of making them. I have to say: being held with such kid-gloves by the author makes me wonder if she thinks the

readers of food fiction novels are idiots or just easily bored.

Iris says

The Colour of Tea is one of the best novels I have ever read. It's incredibly realistic and the character of Grace Miller is one of those who after 5 pages you are already rooting for her. Hannah Tunnicliffe is so expressive with her language description; one of my favorite's is when the colour of a baby's eyes are described as "oolong". The black/orange creamy Chinese tea. It is bittersweet at times because Grace never got to say goodbye to her mother before she passed away and her mother and her were everything each other had before Grace took off and left to Australia. She writes notes; tons of notes to her deceased mother and in hopes of maybe accounting for lost time between them. Finally, after everything, she learns to let go. Her husband and her grow distant and almost never talk; her French cafe-Lilliana's is Grace's only hope for happiness. Her haven of tea and macarons helps her let go of what is lost and embrace the warming new feelings of true love and friendship. A MUST-READ!!!

Vickie says

Grace Miller moves to Macau, an island off the coast of Hong Kong, and realizes that she is totally alone in a strange country. It is here that she and her husband Pete are forced to confront and accept the devastating news of her infertility. Despite the pain, she shores herself up and decides to use her "impetuous" mother's lifestyle to do something for herself: she opens a café serving tea, coffee, and macarons. It is in Lillian's that both Grace and Pete create a new definition of home and family. The characters of Rilla, Gigi, Marjory, and Yok Lan are people I would love to sit with and get to know better.

I loved this book. Hannah Tunnicliffe didn't gloss over the topic of infertility, a very heart-wrenching diagnosis. She exposed some of the underbelly topics of ex-pats taking advantage of and abusing foreign domestic help. But best of all, she drew me into the topic of macarons! Yes, I admit that on my trip to Paris, I went to either Pierre Herme and Laduree everyday to sample the macarons! They were all délicieux!

Chelsey Wolford says

This story pulled on my heartstrings big time. It made me laugh and cry all at the same time. This story is completely Grace's, but she has the help of some amazing secondary characters. A writer who can make the reader appreciate even the smallest characters is getting their job done. There are in fact too many secondary characters for me to name, but they are the icing on top of the cake in this story. Even though I love and came to admire Grace, her story would still not be the same without characters like Rilla and Gigi, and it is safe to say that the book is enjoyable from reading about them alone.

Grace Miller is suffering from a lot of things at the beginning of the novel. Her marriage is struggling, she has been moved to China to follow her husband's career, she wants to become a mother but her chances are not looking good, and on top of it all I believe that she was suffering from depression. For awhile I was beginning to wonder if she was ever going to be able to pull out of the funk that she was stuck in. Then came

in her desire to make, serve, and sell the finest Parisian inspired macarons that Macau has ever seen. When Grace comes upon a closed down café for sale I knew that all her answer lay within those doors. I was praying so hard that she would open up the café and sell her beloved macarons.

Once Lillian's was open it was like reading a whole different book and Grace's loving and spontaneous came out as she met many new faces and shared her passion with the locals. Grace was new to the culture in Macau and therefore had to learn her way around and how things were done just like someone who moves to a new school. It was interesting to watch her transformation from a wilting flower to a blossoming rosebud. At first I questioned if I was going to like her character but by the end of the book I was warming up to her more and more. I love seeing characters come through obstacles in their own lives and see how they adjust to all of the changes.

What a wonderful book full of sugar, tears, smiles, and plenty of macarons. Grace writes letters to her mother throughout the entire book, that are very heartfelt and really allows you to get inside of Grace's mind. I love added touches like that from authors. Grace is given a new hope when the doors of Lillian's open and the transformation of her married as well as social life is something that I would not want to miss.

A copy of this book was provided to me by the publishers at Scribner for an honest review

Honeybee says

Ugh. Can a book be anymore cliché? Such a maddening and annoying book filled with stereotypical, dysfunctional but somehow supposedly redeemable characters. Let's see what annoyed me:

1) Macarons take a lot of skill to make. People practice extensively to perfect this "art". So watching a demo once will not suddenly make you a macaron expert who can pump out countless macarons to sustain a successful cafe.

2) So somehow this character can open up a cafe in a country where she doesn't speak the language, make macarons, make all the other baked goods that supposedly serves, makes coffee/tea, serves customers, cleans, etc. all by herself??? Ya. Ok.
and the biggest, stupidest thing...

3) the implausible ending.

Ok. in retrospect, maybe I hated this book.

Marianne says

The Colour of Tea is the first novel by New Zealand-born author Hannah Tunnicliffe. Set in present-day Macau, this novel tells the story of Grace Miller who is trying to come to terms with some devastating news that will change the future she thought she had. Her marriage is fraying and she is having difficulty holding her life together. Finally, she makes a bold move, something her Mama might have done: she opens a small café, where she serves tea and macarons. As it grows in popularity, she encounters other broken souls and finds friendship and the beginning of fulfilment. But then her husband's uncharacteristic act threatens her happiness, and old ghosts come to haunt her. I found Grace, at first, rather self-indulgent, self-pitying, but her character grew on me, so that, by the end, I was completely absorbed in her story. As the story

progressed, we kept getting hints of her life with her mother, which obviously influenced her behaviour and kept the reader entranced. This novel has an original plot, some wonderful characters and authentic dialogue. Tunncliffe touches on the sense of where you belong and also on the plight of migrant Filipino workers in Macau. This is a wonderful, evocative novel that is reminiscent of those by Barbara O'Neal. I thought that using macaron names and descriptions as chapter headings which echoed events in that chapter was a delightful touch. A remarkable first novel.

Lori says

****Note to cover designer: If the main character is a redhead, please use a red-headed model. Or did you not read the book or even the back blurb? ****

This is the book for you if you enjoy endless introspection. I do not. When the character finally bothered herself to do something and decided to open a cafe, we were robbed of her actually doing it. Two pages later, it's open. I enjoy rooting for a character. If you take away their struggles, what's to root for? The same amount of two pages is also devoted to her tripping on a sidewalk and worrying what others think. Really?

There are NO baking scenes in the cafe. Not a single one, which also felt like robbery. They just get a flavor idea, then poof! Here's the macaron. The ending is plain ole ridiculous and, frankly, not believable, no matter how ill prepared a mother is. And if Grace wanted a child from the beginning, any fool would have put adoption on the table at the beginning, which would have made a great subplot. Ugh.

That being said, Rilla and Gigi are fabulous characters and keep this from going to 1 star or less.

Chrissy says

When it comes to tea, I'm all about it, and that includes books. There is something familiar about tea that makes it so appealing around the world.

I enjoyed this book. Set in Macau with a diverse populace for a Chinese island, the story weaves the lives of Grace--barren wife with a rocky marriage--with a small cadre of women who change her into the secure and confident woman she becomes. Her cafe brings these women together with macarons and tea--a match made in heaven. The characters are well constructed and you share the ride with Grace's ups and downs.

As in most books these days, there are depictions of romanticized sex, but not too bad--nothing I find in most books these days--and not enough to distract from the storyline.

If you are drawn to the melding of disparate lives into a solid, real friendship, then you will enjoy this book.

Simone Ramone says

I found this book bland and cliched...a crush on a French man, a saucy Chinese fortune teller, letters

(numerous) to a dead mother and the inevitable triumph over circumstance were far less interesting than the macaroon recipes and cups of tea.

I didn't hate this, but two days later I could no longer recall the main character's name. When someone asked me what it was about I said, "something about biscuits."

Meg - A Bookish Affair says

3.5. Foodie fiction in China? Yes, please. I was very excited about this book. I love, love, love foodie fiction and I love armchair traveling so this book definitely fit the bill.

I loved the setting of the book. Macau seems like a sort of glamorous place. It has a lot going on and still seems to hold on to its European influence. It was a Portuguese settlement back in the day and is now a special administrative district of China, sort of like Hong Kong. I loved the exotic-ness of the setting. Tunncliffe paints a great picture of the city and its people. It made me want to visit!!! I definitely thought that the book was at its best when the setting was being described. I loved hearing about how Lillian's (the restaurant in the book) was set up.

I also liked the food part. Lillian's is a sort of bakery come tea house that specializes in macarons, a delicious French treat that can be incredibly temperamental to make. The interesting in the book is that Grace doesn't know how to make the macarons at first and so Leon, another character who owns another restaurant, helps her make the macarons and then they become the focus of Grace's shop. I kind of wonder why Grace doesn't choose to build a business around something that she already knew. It just seemed to be a big gamble that I didn't really understand the motive behind. I did like the story. It kept me reading, wanting to see what happens. I did wish that I understood a little bit more about the motives of all of the characters. Grace seems to want to set up a cafe very suddenly and I wish that I knew more about why. She seems to hint at the idea that it was something spontaneous that her mother would do but I'm wondering if that was not the only reason.

I did like the food part of the book. Macarons are totally intimidating to me. It's something that I've never attempted to bake. Thus, I loved living vicariously through Grace. Each chapter was named after one of the macarons served at Lillian's and some of them sound absolutely to die for! I did have one regret on this though. The book talks about all those delicious macarons yet there is not a recipe to be found in the book. Throw us a bone, please!!!

Bottom line: A delicious trip!

Shannon White says

Readers that enjoyed titles such as *The Divine Secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood*, *The Honk and Holler* Opening Soon, and even *The Secret Life of Bees*, are sure to enjoy Tunncliffe's *The Color of Tea*.

The Color of Tea was not what I expected. Although the book takes place in Macau, a rarely discussed locale, the story could really have happened anywhere...even in your own hometown. You will not find elaborate descriptions of Macau or even the culinary delights that Gracie serves up but what you will find is a tale of sisterhood.

Grace is struggling through the acceptance of her own infertility and reliving her own mother-daughter bonds throughout the novel. This struggle transcends into her marriage as well. As Grace searches for something more out of life, she dares to open her own business - Lillian's, a divine cafe serving macarons. It is there that she meets a cast of characters with whom she forms strong friendships. The challenges of each woman will have you enthralled. When you close this book, you'll find yourself missing the ladies already. An entertaining summer read for chick lit fans.

Sue says

I received a copy of The Color of Tea by Hannah Tunnicliffe through the Goodreads Giveaway contest.

This is the first novel by New Zealand-born author Hannah Tunnicliffe. I was very impressed. It was well written, and I found myself snuggled up on the sofa this afternoon reading this book. I would classify this novel as a chick lit. Set in present-day Macau, this novel tells the story of Grace Miller who is trying to come to terms with some terrible news that will change the future she thought she had. Her marriage is falling apart and it takes all of her energy to hold her life together. Finally, she makes a bold move, something her Mama might have done: she opens a small café, where she serves tea and macarons. As the cafe grows in popularity, she encounters other broken souls and finds friendship and satisfaction. But then her husband's does something to threaten her happiness. I found that I was completely absorbed in her story. All along we keep getting hints of her life with her mother, which obviously influenced her behaviour and actions. I thought that using macaron names and descriptions as chapter headings was a original idea. I found myself after I finished the novel, looking up recipes for macarons, tea biscuits and scones. I think I might bake tonight! A very enjoyable read.

Cassandra says

Für Grace bedeutet das Leben in Macao Loslassen und Neubeginn. Es wird Zeit für sie, sich mit ihrem vergeblichen Wunsch schwanger zu werden abzufinden und ihrem Leben einen neuen Sinn zu geben. Kurzenschlossen eröffnet sie in Macao ein Café.

Wer bei dem Cover und der Kurzbeschreibung an einen netten, unterhaltsamen Frauenroman denkt, wird schnell eines Besseren belehrt. Es ist nicht die heile Welt von Macarons backen und Tee trinken, die ich erwartet habe. Hier gibt es handfeste Probleme, die sich durch das ganze Buch ziehen.

Obwohl ich mir von dem Cover etwas anderes erwartet hatte, gefiel mir das Buch sehr gut. Der Schreibstil ist sehr schön und hat mich sofort eingefangen. Ganz nebenbei erfährt man einiges über das Leben in Macao und wie man Macarons backt.

Fazit: Wer nur eine heile Welt sucht, wird mit dem Buch nicht glücklich werden.

Natalie says

When I start reading a new book there are a couple of things that have to happen in order for me to one: start reading the book, and two: continue reading the book. The cover of the book is not always important for me but I do love a cover that captures my eye and I sit back and say "oh now that's a beautiful cover" but sometimes I find a cover of a book so beautiful or interesting it can be the only reason I get it and happy I did because it turns out it was an amazing book, but, sometimes that also back fires on me as well. Also if I can't get past the first 2 - 3 chapters most of the time I will put the book aside for a bit but I will always pick it up at a later time, I NEVER not finish a book, it's kind of like a "B" movie, ya just gotta find out what happens at the end of it lol.

Hannah Tunnicliffe has done both, created a beautiful cover very fitting for this book and I had absolutely no problem getting past the first 2 - 3 chapters, in fact the very first chapter had me captured and happily reading and not wanting to put it down at all. Now I'm not sure if you all know this about me, but some of my love's are food lol (who's isn't), a great book, and travelling (which I never get to do). I have always been very interested in Asian culture, it's beauty, serenity, work ethic, respectfulness, language, their love of family, it is a place I have always wanted to travel to. Hannah's detailed descriptions of not only the character's she has created but the cafe Grace has built right down to Macau, China made me feel like I was right there in the story. I could see, feel, hear, and smell everything she was describing, some books go overboard with the details so much that it leaves nothing to the imagination, that was not the case here.

I have to say for a debut novel Hannah has come out with a huge bang! I really loved this book, it is an easy read as the story flows with all the right elements in all the right places. The characters, oh how I loved them all, I made a connection with all of them from Grace to Rilla, Gigi and Marjory and Gigi's grandmother Yok Lan. Grace started out as a weak character but given her current circumstances you understand why, and I really don't think it was that she was weak as much as it was she just didn't understand how to break away from her sadness she was overtaking her. Once Grace decided to open the cafe and the others entered her life that's when the cloud started to lift from Grace's life and eye's.

This was a fabulous story, a great plot and ending, it made me smile, laugh out loud, even tear up at times, it was emotional and I think throughout the book we could at some point relate in some way to what Grace was either going through or feeling. It made me not want the story to end, it would be great to have a second book years later to see how things turned out for all of them. Bravo Hannah, Bravo, a wonderful debut novel and I can't wait to read more from you. I highly recommend this book and hope you all enjoy it as much as I did. Enjoy!!!
