



## Fortune's Daughter

*Alice Hoffman*

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This fierce and beautiful story charts the histories of two women: Rae, young and unmarried and far from home, awaits the birth of her first child. Lila, a fortune-teller with no interest in the future, has lost her own daughter more than a quarter of a century earlier in New York. When these two women meet in Southern California it's Earthquake Weather – the time when unexpected things happen. Immediately, their lives and fortunes become intertwined, as Rae tries to break away from the man she has been with since high school and Lila reaches into the past to search for the child she lost.

This contemporary world is set against a series of Russian folktales told by an old woman who lives at the edge of Manhattan, in a place so well hidden it can only be found once in a life-time.

## Fortune's Daughter Details

Date : Published December 1st 1999 by Berkley (first published April 1st 1985)

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Author : Alice Hoffman

Format : Paperback 320 pages

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## From Reader Review Fortune's Daughter for online ebook

### Sherilyn says

Having discovered Alice Hoffman sometime in the early 2000s I didn't realize she had books dating back to 1985 which this does, and I daresay this is among my favorites. The earlier Hoffman fiction is among the most magical and this doesn't disappoint. These characters are each so solitary and yet connected in a way that weaves an intriguing story of heartbreak, regret, redemption, and love. I could hardly put it down.

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### Lynne says

The dichotomy of this book simply compels you to read it. While the story is mostly mundane, selfish boyfriend, friendless pregnant girlfriend, befriends a fortune teller with a secret past, develops severe depression, etc., the writing is so incredibly beautiful, magical even. While not really caring about the story, I simply wanted to experience the reading of it. Now that I've completed the book, I'm sorry it's over.

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### Patricia says

I love Alice Hoffman! Her prose is like poetry. I was introduced to her about ten years ago by a friend. It was Practical Magic. Some of her plots are better than others but the imagery of her words never fails to capture me.

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### Lizzie says

Hoffman is a master at portraying the raw humanity of her characters. It's that portrayal of those raw emotions that we all feel - but could never explain - that makes her such a popular author. We can **relate** to her characters because of this, even though outwardly we have nothing in common with them. As *Practical Magic* was my first Hoffman novel, the bar was raised fairly high for the rest of her books. *Fortune's Daughter* doesn't even come close. It's not a stretch for me to say that it was a disappointment.

#### \*\*SPOILERS\*\*

I found it hard to even pretend that I had something in common with Rae and Lila, the two protagonists. While they display the same open emotions as Hoffman's other characters, it just comes across as being wishy-washy instead of endearing. Rae just couldn't decide whether she should stay with her inattentive, detached boyfriend, or if she should do what the reader is screaming at her to do: leave him already, woman! See what I mean? Wishy-washy. Lilia, who began as a somewhat intriguing character, simply goes bonkers by the end of the novel, what with the whole summoning her dead baby's ghost and keeping it in her dresser drawer thing. Yeah. THAT. If you're thinking, "WTF?", then you're not alone. No, Hoffman does NOT clarify the reason for this display of insanity.

#### \*\*END SPOILERS\*\*

The character I wished I would have learned more about was the old fortune teller, Hattie. She was such an

influential character - after all, it was she who taught Lila Tasseography (the art of reading tea leaves), and as another Goodreads reviewer noted, it was with her that the real magic in *Fortune's Daughter* seemed to lie. I found myself hoping and praying that she turn up later, but she never did - and somehow, this was the biggest disappointment of all. Maybe this was the point: Hattie would always remain a mystery, to both the readers and Lila. However, since she was the only interesting character, the point is almost lost on the reader, who meanwhile struggles to remain interested in the protagonists.

The Three Sisters, for which Three Sisters Street was named (and where Lila and Richard lived), pop up unexpectedly toward the end of the book, and get a whopping page and a half devoted to their story. I honestly don't understand the point of this, seeing as how they had no previous importance whatsoever in the plot, other than a street being named for them. They seem cool, really, they do. They just have no real place in this particular story. Maybe if the plot was changed to echo that of *The Probable Future* or *Practical Magic*, in which the most important characters of all are the ones who came before to leave a soft whisper of their legacy. In *Fortune's Daughter*, which centers mostly around the young ones, the babies, any generation that goes beyond that of "mother" simply has no reason to be included.

One last observation/complaint. Hoffman has a knack for describing the weather in her stories. She manages to intertwine the little things, like the weather and landscape, with the emotions of her characters. It acts as an amplifier and makes it all so REAL. Hoffman realizes that the weather really does have an effect on human emotions; that it tells the truth of the feelings we have yet to acknowledge ourselves. She uses this to her advantage, and wields it elegantly.

Except when she's so blatantly WRONG. I am a California native, born and raised. I can honestly say that there is no such thing as "earthquake weather", and anyone who says otherwise hasn't spent much time in California - Hoffman, this means you. There is no real way to predict earthquakes; the only reliable way to tell that something's wrong is to watch the animals. Note that I said "something", not "earthquake". Has Hoffman ever even **been** to California?

She puts so much emphasis on this earthquake thing in the beginning of the story. You just KNOW it's going to come in to play again later, and in a big way. Chapters upon chapters go by, and you start to think, "Well, it's Hoffman. I'm sure she'll tie it in somehow with her characters' lives, and it will be splendid." But nothing happens until somewhere near the end of the book, and it is neither monumental or significant. It reads as if Hoffman was plodding along, when suddenly it occurred to her, "Oh yeah! I made a big fuss at the beginning about an earthquake. I should throw one in there. Maybe no one will notice that I forgot about it." Oh, I noticed. I especially noticed how she failed to tie it in with her character's emotions.

To summarize: this book was a disappointment. If you're undeterred in your motivation to read it, go for it. Just don't expect it to live up to the standards of *Practical Magic*.

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## **Fred Shaw says**

I've just finished another wonderful Alice Hoffman novel. This version of *Fortune's Daughter* was an audiobook by Blackstone Audio, narrated by Carrington McDuffie.

2 women, Rae, a young unwed pregnant woman whose boyfriend seems to have less than a full deck, meets Lila, a fortune teller who is older and married. Their lives become intertwined when Rae asked Lila to tell her fortune. The story weaves between present and past of each in a way only Alice Hoffman can tell it.

I can always count on a wonderful read by Hoffman and my expectations are always met. Characters come to life on the page and the story builds with insight and intrigue at the same time to keep the reader's attention and wanting more. After finishing this novel, I feel as though I have been on a journey knowing Rae and Lila as friends, and I'm better off to have met them.

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### **Cindy Nestberg says**

Just ok. I usually LOVE alice Hoffman's books, but this one. I HATED the women! They were are so dumb, and spineless, and just passive. I mean, why not talk to the men? or other people? and the way the one woman treated her husband who loved her. And then she realizes her child she gave up for adoption had died, when she had this happy ever after story in her head, and she couldn't accept it. ugh!!

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### **Amy says**

I picked this up from Hollings Cancer Center's book sale shelf, conned by a reprinting into thinking this was a new Hoffman, rather than an old one decked out in a new cover. On the one hand, I can see elements of Hoffman's style, which she has honed and crafted into a wondrous thing, richly adored by so many readers (myself included). On the other hand, there were some already tired themes (good girl/bad guy ; rejection) that filled the pages. It's a book about loss, in many forms, a theme I just don't really care to read right now. I didn't particularly like any of the characters, nor did I particularly care what happened to them, but still trundled through to the end. (The one exception was I did want to learn more about the old fortune teller's heritage and village-- sounds like that's where Hoffman's magic was hiding.)

I live in the south where there actually *is* a hurricane season, but have always been told by relatives in California that earthquakes can occur at any time of the year and at any time of the day or night, under all weather conditions, sunny, wet, hot, or cold--without special tendency. So what the hell is earthquake weather, which the first sentence of the book proclaims? "It was earthquake weather and everyone knew it."

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### **Crystal Aldamuy says**

Felt like there was too much nonessential narrative. In the midst of scenes and conversations, the author goes off on tangents that don't add anything to the story loved the relationships, though - how the characters dealt with one another

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### **Jan Priddy says**

This is an early Hoffman that I had never read before. (If it had been my first, I would not have read most everything she has written since.) The magic is there, even when it misfires.

There is considerable evidence of the excellent writer Hoffman will become—the magic realism, the gorgeous language, but so many, so dear, so strong, so sharp, so beautiful . . . so many phrases beginning

with "so" that I found myself counting them. One SO on most pages, some pages with two or even three. The construction most often was appealing, but like the convoluted plot, seemed to complicate itself unnecessarily.

And the end, while gorgeous in language did not displease me. I was not quite convinced. Instead I wondered what sort of mess her personal life was in that she chose this trajectory.

Kirkus Reviews calls the main characters in this 1990 novel "blurry, murmurous" but TNYT seems to have liked it, terming it "lush" and "mythical" and swirling in a "juxtaposition of the mythic, the apocalyptic, with the resolutely ordinary . . ." I might agree with both, and also found it convoluted, messy, and unfocused—a novel where characters thrash without necessarily getting very far, not even in the narrative sense. Some back stories, delivered far too late in the narrative, were touching but beside the point.

Nevertheless, I am happy to have read the novel and I will put it back on my shelf where it has been stored since my mother died. She purchased Hoffman's entire backlist without actually reading these hardbacks from the 80s. It was my mother who first handed me Practical Magic when it first came out in paper. I read others and my favorite in those days was Seventh Heaven. I recall nothing about that novel and I suppose I should reread it to discover if it still appeals to me in the same way. I have loved everything from her I read recently, both the historical and contemporary Faithless.

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### **Christine Locke says**

I'm surprised by the number of negative reviews for this novel. This is actually the first Hoffman novel I read all the way through.

First of all, the writing is breathtaking. I want to write like this. The interweaving of image, especially nature image, with character and action inspires.

Second, the characters all carry pain, even the "bad boy" with the "good girl." And no one is that one-dimensional. The "good" girl is not always good. The "bad" boy is not always bad. And the attempts to connect and reconnect, even when they don't want to, show their desire to overcome the pain of the past and move into a more functional future. The fortune teller who overcomes all her own impulses to the contrary to make herself available to a single girl facing childbirth alone is an excellent example of this.

And last, I understand that some may find these women "typically eighties," or stereotypical. But, look, folks, our culture has jumped light years in a woman's ability to do for herself and for her children on her own. I always want to urge others to be more forgiving of female characters in stories set decades ago. I suspect it was harder than we think.

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### **Alyssa Marie says**

\*Thank you to NetGalley for the opportunity to read this book.\*

I love Alice Hoffman books! This one definitely brought a story and characters to life in a beautiful way. This is a story full of heartbreak, sadness, and loss, but somehow still full of magic, hope, and joy at times.

Fortune's Daughter tells the story of two different women, Rae and Lila. Rae is pregnant with her first child, is unmarried and ended up very far away from home. She left home as a teenager with her boyfriend Jessup and never returned. Jessup was not all she dreamed or hoped he really was. Lila is a fortune teller who is searching the daughter she lost many years ago. Both women carry a lot of pain and are very lonely. Together, their paths intertwine. I can't stay that I loved the main characters in this book - they are definitely flawed, complicated, and don't always make the best choices (or ones I agree with)- but they still felt real. The story flowed beautifully and the prose made the pages just go by quickly. It was easy to get pulled into this world. The plot was easy to follow and understand. The book is filled with magical and poetic descriptions that were not overdone at all. In the end, I wish there were some more loose ends that were tied, up, but it was really an enjoyable read overall.

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### **Lbball27 says**

Lila and Rae, memorable characters. The strength and endurance of a mother's love.

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### **Anna Ragsdale says**

[one of them gives her baby up for adoption and the other gets pregnant and her boyfriend leaves her- the adopted baby dies, but the mom doesn't find out until much later in life (hide spoiler)]

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### **Mary says**

"You don't understand," Lila said. The worst thing in the world for a mother is to leave her child. She couldn't bring herself to remember you, because if she did she'd have to leave you behind." (page 106)

"Out in the rain, Lila pulled her bathrobe tighter around herself. Somehow, she had become forty-six years old, and she didn't know quite how it had happened. She wondered if there was something about California that made the time move so quickly. Without winter to shock you into another year, entire seasons had dissolved in the sunshine; and no one could manage time in a place where even the roses were so confused that they bloomed year round." (page 107)

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### **Mary Ann says**

Ooooh, this is one of Alice's best; she was writing magical realism before anyone knew what it was. I've been reading and re-reading her wonderful stories for years and years and have found only one to be a stinker-Here On Earth.

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### **Heidi Garrett says**

When I read this, I was ready for another Alice Hoffman book. She takes the ordinary world, makes it

completely awful, and then pulls all of the magic and wonder out of it, like a magician pulling a rabbit from a hat. I have several Alice Hoffman books on my sagging Kindle bookshelves and not sure what made me pick this one next, but it was a perfect read for the moment that I was in.

I wonder how much my response to a book has to do with the moment I pick it up in time and start reading it. Like if I gave a book 5 stars when I read it on December 21, 2012 would I have given it 5 stars if I'd read it on March 12, 2009? I don't know. One of life's little mysteries. But--and I am sure all avid readers agree--there's something cosmic about closing your eyes, picking your next read from your heart, and then...ah, yes, those 5 stars.

Fortune's Daughter is a humble book. No dystopia end of the world serial killer vampire werewolf zombie apocalypse. Just a simple tale of unresolved grief and mothers who've lost daughters and daughters who've lost mothers and the men who love them in the best ways that they can. I loved the whole tea-reading-fortune-telling thing and Rae and Lila are interesting within their world's that lack--completely--celebrity and fame or anything very sparkly. Just living their lives. And finding their own magic within them.

I will leave you with this line ... that upon reading it...made me smile and nod because, after all is said and done, life is a mysterious thing...

*Into this cake Lila had baked three gifts: a cool hand to test for fevers, a kiss with the power to chase away nightmares, a heart that can tell when it's time to let go.*

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### **Roberta says**

Listening to the audiobook, I found it hard to recognize the time transitions. Perhaps the written version has different typeface or some other way of indicating that change? I found a lot of the events in this book to be mystical. And from the audio version, I did not get at all what the publisher says: "This contemporary world is set against a series of Russian folktales told by an old woman who lives at the edge of Manhattan, in a place so well hidden it can only be found once in a life-time. " Maybe that's where the mysticism comes in.

Carrington McDuffie does a really good job as narrator.

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### **Marie Sexton says**

If I'd rated Fortune's Daughter the moment I finished it, I would have given it 5 stars. I was completely engrossed and rather weepy by the end. But, having thought about it for a day, there are several points I wish had been wrapped up a little neater. It felt like a lot of things were left unresolved. Still, Alice Hoffman's unbelievable talent always leaves me humbled.

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### **Jenn says**

I have long been an Alice Hoffman fan, but with such a prolific catalog from which to choose, I had always

read primarily from her more recent work. I started with *Practical Magic*, then bounced to *Blue Diary*, which was the most recent at the time, and just kept reading. *Fortune's Daughter*, on the other hand, one of Hoffman's earlier works, lacks the pizazz of her more recent novels. The magic of everyday life is lost in the more traditional female characters of the early 80s. You want to shake one of the main characters and tell her to get her life in order, and wonder why a man has dictated so much of her youth. The other protagonist just needs to be dropped into therapy.

However, this book is not a total washout.

As ever, Hoffman's prose is for the most part, a delight. Her devotion to location, description of climate and flora, as well as simple, everyday fancy does neatly embroider a mostly mediocre novel.

For those just beginning to read Hoffman, I'd start with something a bit more polished, such as *The Probable Future*, *The Blackbird House*, or, my favorite, *Practical Magic*.

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### **Pam says**

Not my favorite Hoffman, but still a decent listen as an audiobook.

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