



Two Old Fools on a Camel: From Spain to Bahrain and Back Again

Victoria Twead

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In this, the third of the Old Fools Trilogy, Vicky and Joe leave their Spanish mountain village to work for a year in the Middle East. How could they know that the Arab Spring was poised to erupt, throwing them into violent events that would make world headlines?

Two Old Fools on a Camel: From Spain to Bahrain and Back Again Details

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Emma says

Another brilliant read from Victoria, I read this in a day and I am sure I will revisit it again as I have the previous 2 books.

I did wonder how different it would be moving from the El Hoyo I have come to know and love, but Victoria writes so well that you instantly feel like you are with her on the journey. I really did laugh out loud on many an occasion but it was also very eye opening regarding the troubles hat were encountered in Bahrain.

Thanks again for a brilliant read and I will be looking forward to reading more from Spain.

Peggy says

3.5 stars, I liked it a little less than the other two books. At the end of the book Joe says they didn't like their year away, and that's quite obvious from the beginning. There's more complaining, and a bit more of a negative or pessimistic feel.

What I loved so much about the first two books were the funny situations Vicky and Joe got into in Spain, all because of cultural differences and language difficulties. In this third book, the other people they interact with are also Westerners, and though they did end up in situations that were (supposed to be) funny, it didn't come close to what I'm used to. Also, they met some Western people in Bahrain whom they didn't like and those people are often made fun of, which wasn't very nice.

Still, I enjoyed catching up with Vicky and Joe again, and it was interesting to read about the political issues going on in Bahrain and how they were experienced by people who were there. I can't wait to meet them again in Spain though!

John says

I found the couple very naive; the points raised in their orientation about local culture was stuff that shouldn't have been as much of a surprise to them. The teaching jobs turned out quite badly with little to offset that downbeat atmosphere; the stories of their colleagues' experiences were largely of the "guess you had to be there" variety to me. The spillover of Arab uprisings to Bahrain was a unique feature, though contributed to the grim tone. As their next book covers life back in Spain afterwards, this one doesn't seem necessary for continuity. In spite of glowing reviews from fans, in all honesty I came away regretting I'd bought it. Really 2.5 stars, but rounding down to two stars would be unfair. Your mileage may vary.

Janet says

Not content with retiring to a 'crazy mountain village' in Almeria; Victoria and Joe decide to brush off the

Spanish cobwebs and move to even warmer climes to spend one last year teaching children in Bahrain. Swapping mules, chickens and kittens for camels, parrots and terrapins,

Live vicariously, plunge yourself into 'Two Old Fools on a Camel', meet her larger than life characters and eavesdrop in on her faultless dialogue.

Only Victoria Tweed could pull something like this off - what's next? Koalas, Crocs and Kangaroos?

Mohamed says

As a Bahraini, I bought this book out of nostalgia, and in many ways it truly entertained me to read a British teacher's experiences with Bahraini locals, culture, and education, as well as the Arab Spring.

However, reading it now, I can't help but notice the Orientalist undertones behind her perspective. The way women were described as exotic with their veils (or the italicized hijab which was referred to so frequently), or her surprise at the lack of camels roaming the streets (in the 21st century Gulf), or the rather annoyingly naive way in which she described the political tensions in the country, all of this was frankly patronizing and ignorant.

I understand that at the end of the day this is a quasi-memoir of a British couple's year teaching in the region, so it is bound to be loaded with their pre-eminent biases, but it felt quite Orientalist to read this as an Arab and not be somewhat frustrated. 2 stars for the trip down memory lane, but no more than that.

Carol Wakefield says

A fine theme. A year teaching in Bahrain. And the parts about Bahrain, teaching in a private school for immensely wealthy students-- not always easy, and the Arab spring as it evolved in Bahrain were wonderful. The third or so of the book describing evenings spent in the local bar with a retelling of jokes and anecdotes -- not so much. "you had to be there" I expect. It all became quite boring read soberly. Too bad there wasn't more on the Bahrain experience. Rather disappointing in all.

Ngdecker says

I was really interested in this book as I wanted to learn about the country and customs and all the reviews said how funny it was. I was very disappointed.

It was about a couple who were British, but had lived in Spain. They went to earn money and teach in Bahrain for at least a year or maybe more. I was really horrified at the way the school was run. The students were also disgusting to my way of thinking. They were spoiled and undisciplined and used to their parents buying them anything.

Some of the things the author pointed out were things I had never thought of - the fact that there is really no countryside to enjoy. The students didn't have any pets. They thought people who were poor were of no value.

It did describe the "Arab Spring" uprisings and that was interesting, although I think I would have left the country before the authors did.

Unfortunately, I guess I have a different sense of humor. I didn't find the book funny and the practical jokes they played didn't really appeal to me.

All in all, I'm glad I read the book, but will not seek out any others by the author. I found it rather depressing.

Mary says

A lot of this seemed to be more of the "I guess you had to be there" kind of story. Things tended to either ramble or digress quite a bit too. I was hoping for more on what was going on in Bahrain, but there wasn't much of that. There were also quite a few references to people in Spain that must have been referenced in earlier books, but were brought up out of the blue in this one.

Jill Dobbe says

As an overseas educator who also worked in the Middle East, Victoria captured the daily school life perfectly. The madness of missing teachers, horrific student discipline, screwed up schedules, riding the school van to and from school, constant school days off, not to mention the safety issues, are all things that we dealt with, too. It goes without saying that I could really relate to the experiences in her book, however I thought there was too much written about the idiocy of one teacher in particular. (I wonder if he even knew that he was being written about.) Victoria's descriptions of the teachers and her sense of humor kept the book interesting. You gotta have a good sense of humor to be able to live and work in the Middle East!

Glenda Lynne says

I enjoyed some of the events, but I do not find much humor in making fun of other people, so I found that part distasteful. Very little was written about the actual political events in Bahrain, thus I found that disappointing. A great deal was written about socializing with other staff members and playing barroom type pranks on one another. I didn't find those events interesting. My favorite parts involved the stories about the students, the classroom activities, and the challenges that arose in trying to teach in a very different culture. I admire the author and her husband for their brave and adventuresome spirit, but I would not go out of my way to recommend this book to others.

Allison Slowski says

Book 3 in the Two Old Fools series. There were some moments I was laughing so loud that people around me thought I was losing it (including the dog). I did really miss El Hoyo, but am so glad to have had another glimpse into life, this time taking the brave step to move to Bahrain to teach for a year.

Thanks for another brilliant read, Victoria. You are a great storyteller :) Can't wait to see what's next!

Karen says

Vicky and Joe Twead decide to take teaching positions in Bahrain for a year, and this book describes that experience. What makes this more unique than usual is that they are in Bahrain during Bahrain's Arab Spring in 2011.

This is the third book in a series of the Twead's life in retirement, and I enjoyed this book.

Anne says

Won't make a camel laugh

As I always finish what I start I kept going through this turgid drivel.

What a piece of vanity writing! The author is irritating, ignorant and arrogant by turn.

Her constant references to the clothing worn by Muslim women gave me the impression she thought herself superior to them, as she undoubtedly did to her pupils. After all, it was their fault they didn't learn. Not her's for being a poor, unimaginative teacher.

The tale was sadly lacking in the 'hilarity' promised in the introduction.

The first and definitely the last in this sorry saga that I will ever read.

The one star is for inclusion of the recipes even though these are someone else's creation.

Isa says

I read this book because it revolved around my school during my time there. There are a lot of funny and nostalgic moments that made me smile. However, there were a lot of details that I personally found over exaggerating and (to-some-point) stereotypical.

Kerry says

I'd give this book 3.5 stars. The irrepressible Tweads remain irresistible but I didn't enjoy this as much as the Spanish memoirs. Perhaps it was the locale - you couldn't help but picture how uncomfortable an experience Bahrain must have been for Europeans. The culture shock never seemed to have faded and frankly, I couldn't really understand a willingness to stay there through the political upheavals (especially when the embassy is encouraging evacuations). I think to some degree the lack of warmth for Bahrain really detracted from the narrative - they didn't really enjoy themselves, so it wasn't a big surprise to like this book less. I got the distinct impression they were making the best of difficult circumstances throughout. That said, the Tweads just seem like people you can't help but like and cheer for, so I look forward to reading future adventures and I appreciated the insight to Bahrain as a whole. I laughed out loud at Joe's trolley adventure and the barking/biting/getting kicked in the head incident. That's just comedy. I also quite liked the recipes in this book - I'm a veggie so its nice to get some new lentil ideas.

