



Three for a Wedding. (Tales from Cook's Cove).

Mary C. Sheppard.
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Grades 6-9 / Ages 11-14.

Review by Mary Thomas.

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Reviewed from Uncorrected Proofs.

excerpt:

I had been in the middle of a big fight with my mother yesterday when the phone rang: Mom jumped to answer it. I was making my point yet again that once I graduated high school next year I had no intention of going to Toronto, or even St. John's, to start a science degree. It wasn't like we hadn't been over the same ground a few too many times already.

I screamed at her that I didn't want to leave Cook's Cove for years of studying, and besides, I'd do what I wanted to do, not what she wanted me to do. So there! What I never said, and didn't know how to say was that my dad, who had died six years ago, had worked his whole life to keep us here and I couldn't bear how she was bent on ripping out my roots. Just because she missed out on leaving the Cove when she was my age didn't mean I had to fulfill her dream. I had my own dreams.

"Hello," my mom said into the mouthpiece, and then she looked at me with daggers in her eyes, put her finger on her lips and held her hand up, palm flat out, in a "stop right there" gesture. Once I saw from the way the blood drained from her face that the call was serious, I took a deep breath, flounced onto the couch and pinned my ears back to hear every word.

At the end of *Seven for a Secret*, the first of Mary Sheppard's "Tales from Cook's Cove," Melinda, pregnant and about to be married, wishes that her child be a girl who will not "make her a grandmother at thirty." In *Three for a Wedding*, we see that she has got her wish: Jenny, her elder daughter, engaged to be married at twenty-one to an engineering student killed on an oil rig, six years later is going to be married, and only her younger sister dares to suggest that it might be because she is pregnant. Having seen three crows at what she considered to be an auspicious moment, Jenny has decided, going along with the counting rhyme, that three bridesmaids are a must for her wedding. One of these would obviously have to be her sister Violet, the narrator of the story, in spite of her disregard for her clothes and appearance, and the second one, Lady, a next door neighbour and a complicated step/in-law cousin, but, for the third, Jenny lights on another cousin. Grace Mae is the daughter of Rebecca, her mother's first cousin. She lives in Boston, goes to a private school, has pots of money, is good at everything and is apparently a complete knock-out. And therein lies the tale. Out of the blue, and at one day's notice, Grace Mae arrives in Cook's Cove six weeks before the wedding instead of the original two apparently because of a "flood in her boarding school." In Violet's words, "Though I'd never met her, I'd hated her for years," and now they are going to be sharing a room for almost two months, as well as preparing for Jenny's wedding, writing final school exams, and doing all the beginning-of-summer things that make up life in a small Newfoundland outpost!

Needless to say, all does not go as smoothly as silk, but in the course of their time together, the cousins find out things, good and bad, about each other that put them well along on the path to true friendship. And in spite of all the frustrations and difficulties, Jenny's wedding eventually "goes off without a fuss" as everyone always hopes weddings will, in spite of the fact that the only truly memorable weddings are those at which something or things go spectacularly wrong.

Life in Cook's Cove has moved on in the 30 years between the first book and this one in the series, and they now have a bridge across the bay and a road all the way to Corner Brook. The community, however, is as tightly knit as ever, with everyone knowing everything about everyone else, and mostly being happy that this is the case. The whole book exudes a sense of togetherness that is seldom experienced these days, except perhaps in the virtual fake reality of an internet game. This atmosphere is the book's main strength as the reader is pulled into the life of the village. Vi, while refusing to take an interest in clothes and exceedingly unsure of herself in a boy-girl dating situation, is otherwise very certain indeed about her capabilities and what is expected of her as one of the Derbys of Cook's Cove. She copes with the chores of organizing many aspects of the church fete, supports Jenny through the trials of pre-wedding panics, gets a child with a festering sore on her leg packed off to hospital, and is amazingly quick to be appreciative of Grace Mae's undoubted talents for people manipulation and dress design. She could, in fact, come across as an insufferable prig, but luckily she has a few bad habits (rolling her eyes is one, though she's not the only one to indulge in that) that make her, instead, a sympathetic character with ambition, but so much love of family and home that she will always be anchored to her particular piece of Newfoundland. We can be glad that, with any luck, there will be another four books to round out the series and our appreciation of outpost life.

Recommended.

Mary Thomas lives and works in Winnipeg, MB, but has visited (and fallen in love with) Newfoundland.