



Small Kindnesses

Satya Robyn

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Leonard Mutch has just discovered his wife was lying to him for years – but can he bear to uncover the truth?

Leonard and Rose Mutch were happily married for forty years. But after her sudden death, Leonard is shocked to find a train ticket in her handbag to a town Rose had never visited. Then a letter arrives from a childhood friend of Rose's, hinting at a past she never told him about.

Reluctantly embarking on an investigation into the life of the woman he thought he knew as well as himself, Leonard is faced with questions that threaten to destroy his happy memories. Why did Rose secretly leave work every Tuesday? Why did she tell lies about her family? And why is their daughter so desperate for him to stop digging into the past?

As his whole life threatens to unravel, Leonard must make an impossible choice – between his memories and a truth he could never have imagined...

From the bestselling author of *The Most Beautiful Thing*, *Small Kindnesses* is a gripping and ultimately life-affirming novel that explores the power of secrets and the healing qualities of love.

Previously sold as 'The Blue Handbag'.

Small Kindnesses Details

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From Reader Review Small Kindnesses for online ebook

Ellen says

This Kindle freebie moved a bit slowly for me, but it was a decent read. The main character, only 62, acted like a dotty old man in several parts of the story, which annoyed me. My husband is 62 and I'm just a three years behind him and I assure you that we and our friends aren't as clueless and muddled as Leonard is. His new friend in the book is just as annoying. She stops and starts her comments over and over again, like this: "You don't need to . . . It's really up to . . . I won't say another word. You tell me if you, you know. I'd be happy to . . ." Arrrrgh! If there had been only one or two 'statements' like this, it would have been okay, but there were many. I realize it was a way for the author to convey the uncertainty of the character, but it became too much for me. Leonard's most implausible move was when he called his daughter, who had just exhibited the first signs of an impending emotional breakdown that had something to do with her late mother, and he proceeded to tell her that he and his new friend were investigating his late wife's actions--prompting another emotional outburst from his beloved daughter! I sure hope I'm more sensitive than he is! The 'mystery' involving his late wife was easy to solve and the story was simple. It was okay.

Alison says

For a long time I wasn't sure where this gently told story was going, but the ending, when you get there, is powerful and leaves more questions than answers.

Small Kindnesses is about Leonard, a man in his sixties who is just starting to get over the death of his beloved wife, Rose. Life has settled into a pattern and he enjoys his job as a gardener. One day he discovers an old handbag of Rose's, with a train ticket to Didcot inside. He's confused as they don't know anyone in Didcot and he didn't think they had secrets from each other. A few days later a letter arrives from Lily, an old school friend of Rose who is seeking a reunion. Leonard calls her to break the sad news of Rose's death and they fall into an unlikely friendship. But when Lily mentions being jealous of Rose's lovely long hair Leonard is confused - because Rose always kept her hair short, in fact she said she had a medical condition from birth that meant it didn't grow more than a few inches. As more clues to Rose's secret life unveil themselves Lily - a detective novel addict - and Leonard start to piece together a story - but the truth is far sadder than they could ever have thought.

As I said, this is a gentle tale that takes its time to get started, and I sometimes found myself getting tired of the descriptions of Leonard's flowers and the slow pace. However, as the clues came together I was drawn to the same conclusions as Leonard and was equally shocked and saddened by the truth. It left many questions - why did Rose keep her hair short? Why did she feel so unable to share her past with Leonard? How did their daughter cope with carrying a secret throughout her teenage years?

At one point the author says, "We are all full of secrets ... and most of us have a bigger secret that threatens to choke us." When you discover what Rose's secret is you'll be amazed that it didn't choke her that she could be a loving wife and mother and friend for all those years.

An intriguing novel and I shall look for more by this author.

Hope says

I liked this story of a widower who discovered his wife's well-kept secrets after her death. I enjoyed the good writing and the gentle mystery as Leonard followed up clues about her past. But the ending was a bit awkward and the occasional use of the f-word kept this from being a truly cozy read.

Kenetha Stanton says

This is a really lovely, gentle story, and it is written with such beautifully descriptive language that reading it is a real treat. The mystery in this story revolves around a widower who has discovered that there were things about his late wife that he did not know, and he struggles to put together the clues that have been left behind to figure out what secrets she had hidden from him. In the course of this investigation, he winds up exploring his memories of his relationship with his late wife, his relationship with his daughter, his daughter's relationships with her husband and children, and his relationships with various friends and co-workers. All of these are very beautifully and realistically drawn with all of the complexities of real life.

While the mystery is what pulls the reader into the story and keeps the pages turning, these explorations of relationships and the small kindnesses that are so necessary to keep relationships alive are the real treasure of this novel. Gardeners will also find the descriptions of gardens and plants to be a treat!

Amanda says

This was an interesting book. It was described as a mystery without the trauma and drama, and that is a good label. Leonard, the main character, learns something surprising about his late wife, and the mystery is unraveling what it means. The book is mostly stream of consciousness from inside Leonard's head, written in the present tense. It's a different style, but I enjoyed it--maybe because I saw many of my own thoughts in Leonard's. There is not much action but rather thoughts and putting the puzzle pieces together, but it was enjoyable. The only thing I don't really like is the title; I don't quite see how it fits the story. Supposedly it was previously published as "The Blue Handbag" or something like that, and to be honest, I probably would not have paid attention to the book if it had that title. This title at least caught my eye, and so I guess it did its job, even if it doesn't quite fit the story. This is a great story for something a bit different, as a change of pace from what you probably normally read.

Karen says

A lovely story about family, friends and secrets

I did think the main character was portrayed as much older than 62, this spoilt it a bit for me really

Adri says

I have become a little weary of free books - poor editing, scant story-lines, under- and over-developed

characters.

But I cared about Leonard, his daughter Raine, and his friend Lily from the beginning. As I did about Rose. And it was exactly the 'small kindnesses' of Leonard that made the book such a special treat: the way he speaks to his dog Pickles, the way his shivvies himself along, consoles himself. It is in the gentleness of his approach to nature, his little grandsons, his hapless son-in-law.

This is a gem of a book, and I feel glad to have read it.

Carrie Webb says

Wonderful read

Slow, but perfect pace as clues present themselves to a husband and he learns more about the wife he thought he knew.

Linda says

Did you like MAJOR PETTIGREW'S LAST STAND? Did you like how the story crept up on you until you were enthralled with the characters and the actions? Did you hate for it to end? If so, I recommend SMALL KINDNESSES. Leonard Mutch is recovering from his grief at losing his wife, He thinks that his life is getting on, when he begins to discover some clues to an apparent secret life that his deceased wife has kept well hidden. The characters are particularly well drawn (I can almost feel Pickles, the dog, hop up on my lap) and the complexity of human nature is peeled away slowly - but never completely. In hindsight the ending was predictable, but I was so engrossed in the journey to the end that I was unhappy to bid farewell to Leonard.

Chris says

An interesting story told in a sweet, gentle manner.

Elaine says

This is an absolutely breath taking read. It is the story of Leonard, a widower who finds himself in a dilemma when he comes across a train ticket in an old handbag belonging to his late wife Rose, to a town where as far as he is aware, she had never ever been to. The train ticket plays on his mind (as sometimes unexplained things do); he can't get it out of his head and when he meets an old friend of hers, Lily, something she says makes him realise that maybe he didn't know Rose as well as he thought.

The story moves in a very gentle way, the mystery is revealed gradually and deepens as the tale goes on, so by the end of it you really are hooked, wanting to know the truth, as much as Leonard.

Leonard himself is a wonderful character - a genuinely nice man who is very normal and the author has portrayed him in a very realistic way, we see his good points and his bad points. We soon get to really care about him as it is his very normalness that is so appealing to the reader - he could be anybody's father, husband or brother.

The writing is wonderful and in particular the author has done a fantastic job of describing the loneliness of a widower living on his own after years of happy marriage. Just a simple sentence, such as pointing out the single set of crockery and cutlery on the draining board is enough to set the scene of Le

Debbie Robson says

I've always believed in the idea of kindred spirits ever since I read Anne of Green Gables. As a writer it is lovely to encounter a writer that I consider a kindred spirit. In that I mean someone who approaches a subject matter like I do; who writes scenes the way I instinctively feel I would have done (or hope I would have done) given that character, that location and that storyline. It is, to use an old cliché, like coming home. Of course as a writer and reader my aim is to challenge myself so I do try and read writers very different to myself and that's why occasionally when I stumble on an author like Fiona Robyn - suddenly I'm on holiday!

I absolutely love Leonard. He is a very memorable character. He's a gardener for one of those fascinating heritage estates in England. He is recently widowed and now lives alone except for his dog named Pickles. His life has settled into a familiar routine, that is until he finds a train ticket to Didcot in his late wife's blue handbag. Didcot is a place that he is sure his wife Rose never visited. Several other memories begin to bother him and Leonard's hunt for the truth begins.

Gradually, of course, Leonard uncovers one fact after another about his late wife and Robyn's pacing is wonderful in this. Slowly we move deeper into Leonard's life. We find out about his troubled daughter, his working life at the estate, his social life down the pub and his new friendship with Lily, an old school friend of Rose's.

Here's Leonard at the estate:

"He moves slowly through his domain, taking immense pleasure from the land. This bare rose bush, these leaves crumbling into leaf mould, these pale green buds. That line of alders on the horizon. He's looking at the results of the earth, sun and rain working together, helped along by thousands of pairs of hands through the ages. Thousands of pairs of hands, including his own. All is in order. He heads back to the mess-room for that cup of tea."

This is a gentle, yet evocative and beautifully written book. Recommended for the discerning reader.

Alison Theodore says

Living life with blinders on as the main character does in this story, trying to grieve, heal, and finding out huge secrets, brings us to know a man with a gentle soul. Somewhat feeling like it was too long, but in the end I'm glad I read it. This could be anyone's life in the world. Fictional characters that ring true to life.

Gail says

Clever intermingling of intrigue and love

I recommend this book to readers of romance and mystery. The way emotional turmoil is captured through the character's inner dialogue is a display of skillful writing. The characters are refreshingly imperfect.

Ron Smith says

Leonard Mutch must be one of the least aware fictional characters in recent memory. He has no clue about the secret life of his wife of many years, nor that her childhood friend has any interest in him other than to help uncover his now-deceased wife's secret. He also has no idea how to help his adult daughter, who wields pent-up anger like a cudgel. In the hands of Fiona Robyn, however, Leonard is an endearing guy worth getting to know. None of the characters in *Small Kindnesses* is always lovable, but they are like people we all know. They are like us.
