



## The Tea Planter's Wife

*Dinah Jefferies*

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**The Tea Planter's Wife** Dinah Jefferies

**#1 International bestselling novel set in 1920s Ceylon, about a young Englishwoman who marries a charming tea plantation owner and widower, only to discover he's keeping terrible secrets about his past, including what happened to his first wife, that lead to devastating consequences**

Nineteen-year-old Gwendolyn Hooper is newly married to a rich and charming widower, eager to join him on his tea plantation, determined to be the perfect wife and mother. But life in Ceylon is not what Gwen expected.

The plantation workers are resentful, the neighbours treacherous, and there are clues to the past - a dusty trunk of dresses, an overgrown gravestone in the grounds - that her husband refuses to discuss.

Just as Gwen finds her feet, disaster strikes. She faces a terrible choice, hiding the truth from almost everyone, but a secret this big can't stay buried forever....

## The Tea Planter's Wife Details

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Author : Dinah Jefferies

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## From Reader Review The Tea Planter's Wife for online ebook

### Julie says

The Tea Planter's Wife by Dinah Jeffries is a 2015 Penguin publication. I was provided a copy of this book by the publisher and the LibraryThing early reviewer program.

The Tea Planter's Wife is an exemplary novel, written with a lush literary prose, which pulls me deep into the landscape and historical setting of colonial Ceylan.

Gwen, only nineteen, marries Laurence, a widower, after a whirlwind romance. Laurence is a tea planter running a successful plantation, and Gwen is determined to learn the business and be a good asset to her husband.

However, almost from the beginning, Gwen finds her husband is still haunted by the death of his first wife, the staff behaves oddly, and then Gwen finds she must cope with her sister-in-law, Verity, who wishes to keep Laurence all to herself, as well as watching another woman try to steal away her new husband.

If this were not bad enough, Gwen will soon face a crisis that will tear her heart to pieces while the atmosphere around her becomes almost oppressive.

This story is so absorbing and haunting, I couldn't bear to continue reading it, but couldn't stop turning pages. This book taps every emotion imaginable, as Gwen tries to navigate her new surroundings and faces one wall of opposition after another, one trial after another, while carrying a heavy burden on her heart.

I became frustrated with all the characters at one point or another, and Verity is most certainly a poisonous character, but I often found myself irritated with Laurence, who constantly turned a blind eye to those issues plaguing Gwen and the people causing her such great heartache.

This couple will encounter incredible adversity, survive hardships, and endure much heartache, make mistakes and harbor dark secrets in their souls. Naturally, the racial divide is one which causes so many misunderstandings, and it is so very sad to think how this situation could have turned out differently if not for that prejudice.

But, ultimately this is a love story, one that proves love's power to overcome vindictiveness, jealousy, grief and pain, and can give the heart the fortitude to forgive, accept, change, and move on with renewed hope.

This is a well written novel, with very interesting historical details, set in a magical location, and is packed with riveting dramas that kept me engaged and very invested in the characters on an emotional level.

I loved the atmosphere in this one, the slight Gothic tones, and the tantalizing pace that swept me away to another time and place.

## Brenda says

4.5★s

At nineteen years of age Gwendolyn Hooper was young to be leaving home and venturing half way across the world to live in a new country. But her recent marriage to Laurence meant leaving her home in London and joining him in Ceylon where he owned a large and prosperous tea plantation. Her journey by sea was long and tiresome but her excitement was great. Her arrival though was fraught with worry and concern when Laurence wasn't there to meet the ship. When a young coloured man by the name of Savi Ravasinghe came to her aid, leading her to a hotel to wait in the cool interior, she was grateful. But little did she realize that Savi would feature in her life in the future...

Slowly Gwen learned about life on a tea plantation – the servants in the house, the coloured workers in the grounds outside. But Laurence's sister Verity was constantly at their side. Gwen couldn't seem to warm to Verity, while Verity had an almost clinging nature with her brother. And some other strange things were happening – a grave which was buried in bushes and seemingly abandoned, found near the house; a beautiful lake plus a nearby waterfall that she wasn't allowed to go near – and a trunk filled with musty old clothing. But the worst was that Laurence wouldn't discuss his previous wife, Caroline – what was it about the past that Laurence wanted to keep hidden from Gwen?

Life continued with Gwen loving Ceylon and her marriage to Laurence – the occasional problems were fairly easily sorted out and with Gwen in charge of the house, she enjoyed running things as she saw fit; it was Laurence's way of showing his trust in her. But would their happiness remain? The speed that the unexpected disaster hit had her reeling; but there was no way Gwen could divulge the truth – her sanity depended on it. What would happen to Gwen? Could she keep the secret that she knew would mean the end of everything she had worked so hard for?

I thoroughly enjoyed *The Tea Planter's Wife* by author Dinah Jefferies. My first by this author, I found the story filled with intrigue and interesting anecdotes which took place in the early 1900s. The hustle and bustle of Ceylon; the racism which was deep and ingrained in the minds of most of the white people – the build-up of resentment and volatility by the coloured people toward the whites; the lack of amenities – all blended together with a mostly fast moving plot and a main character who had me wondering how much more she could take! I have no hesitation in highly recommending *The Tea Planter's Wife*.

With thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for my copy to read and review.

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## Vicki says

The cover drew me in. The storyline kept me reading, and the setting, made me want to pack my bags. The characters were richly described and as I said before, the setting was lush and amazing. I found the story a little long winded on occasion but then I would get caught up in the locale.

The historic value was great and it shared the story of a life I knew nothing about. I think it told a beautiful story that captured the heart of the characters and their life. Dinah Jefferies did a wonderful job of taking me from Kentucky to Sri Lanka. With so much intrigue and secrets, it was one of those books that you thought about when you weren't reading. I was provided a copy of this book from the publishers and Blogging for Books.

## Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

I buddy read this book with Erin, Stephanie, and Heather!

The Tea Planter's Wife is about a young woman named Gwen who arrives in Ceylon to start her new life as a married woman to a tea planter named Laurence who is a widower. But, before we get to meet Gwen there is a prolog about a woman with a small child and I wondered what the woman would have for connections to the story.

Gwen meets on the ship Savi Ravisinghe and I was worried for a while that this would turn out to be a love-triangle, but the story thankfully never turned in that directions. However, Savi will have a role to play in the story.

As I stated above did I buddy read this with some friends of mine and that was an interesting experience with us discussed the chapters we had read once every week. But, somewhere along the way the story just didn't move forward at a pleasant pace and suddenly a break in reading and discussing the book happened and weeks passed and we just didn't read more. Then I decided that enough is enough, now I will finish the book.

So, I'm looking forward to seeing what my friends think about the rest of the books. For me, I was happy to get answers at last, but I still felt that the book story didn't really work for me and my biggest problem was that I never really cared for most of the characters in the book. Gwen just never become an interesting character, and I was constantly irritated by her attitude towards her sister-in-law Verity. And, at the same time, I found Verity highly annoying. So I was constantly frustrated with them both. And, then we have Laurence, Gwen's husband, and to be honest, he was quite dull and even the "mystery" with his dead wife felt a bit dull. The only characters I did like was Gwen's cousin Fran, but she was hardly in the book.

For me, this book just didn't work. It never really got surprising or engrossing enough to make me truly enjoy the book and the last part of the book I finished just because I had been reading the book so long that I wanted finally to get it off my reading list. I did like it enough to finish the book and I did enjoy part of the book. But, I think the book would have worked better if I had found the characters more likable or at least more interesting.

I want to thank The Crown Publishing Group for providing me with a free copy through Edelweiss!

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## Elyse says

Lots of things about this book bothered me. Firstly the heroine is the one magical white woman who isn't awful to the native workers on her husband's tea plantation. Rather than actually explore the lives of those workers in any meaningful way, the author chose to focus on the super messed up rich family who owns the plantation. The way the workers are exploited is discussed but in a fairly superficial way. Had the book been set in the Southern U.S. on a slave plantation this would clearly be interpreted as tone deaf, but apparently it's okay in Ceylon.

The final message--that Gwen would not have had to give up her daughter has she only trusted her husband--is so incredibly awful and heartbreaking that it made me want to chuck the book. Honestly none of the main characters were likeable except for Naveena, and I spent most of my time feeling sad for her. Overall a troubling, depressing read.

## Sally906 says

I really enjoyed this story and its beautiful exotic setting. I also loved having a little of the basic background behind how the tensions between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils developed and later (after the book has finished) escalated into the civil war that lasted for many years. THE TEA PLANTER'S WIFE is set between the two world wars and is told from the point of view of Gwen – the tea planter's young wife. When she arrives she is in her late teens and so in love with her husband, an older widower. However the wonderful person she married back in England is less attentive in Ceylon, almost a different person. With him gone all day Gwen has to work out the intricate social system between the white owners, the local Sinhalese and the Tamil workers. Social divisions, different customs, inexplicable expected acceptable behaviour that Gwen can't understand means she keeps getting into trouble when she crosses them. Everyone thinks they know better than Gwen – but she reacts to what her heart is telling her – not what people tell her, determined to do what is right rather than what is expected. Then she falls pregnant and everything changes and Gwen has to fight to keep her sanity and keep her marriage together.

THE TEA PLANTER'S WIFE is a gripping story as it covers the topics of deceit, family secrets, violence to workers, grief and racism. The anguish that Gwen goes through tugs at the heartstrings but in the end it gives her the strength to do what has to be done. I did guess the family secret earlier on in the story but still enjoyed how the author worked her way to the big reveal. The different characters are well drawn and come alive on the pages – Savi a coloured artist; Gwen's sister-in-law Verity; the other woman Christina, and the mysterious first wife Caroline who is dead but influences the story. These characters all interact to produce a story that has smouldering tension and a fast moving plot. I was sucked into the exotic world and not let go until the last page. I highly recommend this book. She has written a book previously called THE SEPARATION set in Malaysia in the 1950s which I will certainly be looking up.

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## Cathrine ?? says

2.75★

Thank you to NetGalley & Crown publishing for an advance copy of this book.

I liked the setting of early 1900s Ceylon, the descriptions of the land, people, and tea of course. It starts with a mystery and jumps ahead 12 years later. A young naive bride has arrived to begin life with her widowed husband on his tea plantation. Things get off to a rocky start. Secrets, a questionable sister-in-law, then more secrets are lurking, and new acquaintances with their own agendas are untrustworthy. A bit of a romantic melodrama from my point of view.

I think if this is the type of story one is drawn to there would not be much to criticize. Unfortunately, it's not my preference in reading these days. In my 20s or 30s I might have enjoyed it more. There wasn't much grabbing my attention. The main plot reveal was no surprise to me and that was the entire story. Often a reader can figure things out ahead of time but the story line and characters can be so interesting that it doesn't matter. That was not the case with this one, for me at least. So a rather ho-hum read but I can certainly see the potential for appeal to other readers.

## Karen says

When 19 year old newly wed Gwendolyn arrives in 1920's Ceylon to join her much older husband Laurence, the owner of a tea plantation, she is excited and looking forward to her new life. However, the reality is far from what she expected. Laurence seems to have changed towards her, he is no longer as loving and seems to be withdrawing from her; her youth and inexperience make her ill equipped to cope with him and the household responsibilities she is now expected to take on. She is unaccustomed to the people and their cultures and her natural sense of fairness brings her into conflict with others. The arrival of Laurence's spoilt and spiteful sister, Verity, does not help matters and Gwen's feelings of isolation are keenly felt.

This was such an evocative and atmospheric novel that I was captivated from the beginning and it really was a book that I didn't want to put down. The Ceylon landscape, the hustle and bustle of the city, its colours and its people are all vividly described and I really felt as if I were there, watching the story unfold. The different cultures and resentments, the political unrest, the racial prejudices – these all add an element of unease and danger to the story.

This is a beautifully written drama of jealousy, deception, devastating decisions and guilt that will impact on the lives of Gwen and Laurence and others around them, some parts were just heartbreaking. All the characters were so expertly drawn, especially Gwen, who had to quickly mature and find an inner strength. Other characters that stood out for me, were the mysterious but charming artist Savi Ravasinghe, the brash American banker Christina, and Verity – Laurence's sister who refuses to relinquish her hold on her brother. I'm deliberately trying not to give away much of the story as it really is one that you need to read and enjoy for yourselves.

I really enjoyed Dinah's debut novel last year, 'The Separation'. I was very much looking forward to The Tea Planter's Wife, and I wasn't disappointed. When I finished the book, I had a distinct feeling of loss, which is quite unusual for me - I had been so caught up with the lives of these characters. I absolutely loved it and am certain it will be one of my top books of this year.

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## Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

I thought this book was okay. It wasn't great and it wasn't bad. But that is just my opinion, others love it and others don't love it and it's all good.

There is a little prologue in the front of the book that had me wondering for a good while. But there comes a time when secrets come out that I finally figured out who the person was and what it was about. It was actually sad.

This story is about 19 year-old Gwendolyn (Gwen) and she marries a wonderful tea planter named Laurence. They meet in London but she soon marries him and moves to Ceylon to his tea plantation. He ends up with two of them and a third on the way.

Laurence has a ton of workers and people that help with the house. It takes a little bit for Gwen to get used to everything. One of the servants named Naveena was very good to her and I liked that character. It turns out

there are some secrets about her too.

Let me just go ahead and say there are about a ton of secrets in this book. It's like a mystery trying to figure everything out. I had a big idea of one thing when Gwen has her twins about a year later. I won't go into that though. I will say it is another very, very sad story in the book.

When Laurence and Gwen do get to their home, Laurence starts acting all weird. He pretty much acts bizarre through the whole book.

And, OMG, his freaking sister, Verity! I wanted to drop-kick her off the roof! She was a horrible person. She was constantly up in their faces and in their home. Even when she found home for herself with her husband, she was still up in their business all of the time. But, Laurence didn't do much about it even when Gwen complained. Verity also wanted Laurence to keep giving her money. It isn't any wonder Laurence was bizarre about things. But, he actually did have some things in the past that haunted him, more so on the plantation. His late wife died there, but I'm not going to tell you what all happened there but it's a lot of sadness.

I liked Gwen's cousin Fran and Mr. Ravasinghe. They were very nice people and ended up getting married even though it was frowned upon because she was English and he was Sinhalese. But they didn't care and I don't care so there.

Like I said before, I thought the book was good, but nothing really special. I do think a lot more people will like the book more than me and that's great. I will tell you that it made me want to drink some tea!

\*I would like to thank Blogging For Books for a print copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.\*

MY BLOG: Melissa Martin's Reading List

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## Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot...>

Book reviewers are typically solo acts. We pick our books, read our selections, post our thoughts and repeat. We obviously enjoy it, but a lot of us crave debate and discussion when analyzing literature which is what led a small group of my friends and I to commit to a buddy read.

The selection process, as you might imagine, was rather amusing. Four book junkies, rifling through their TBRs, submitting title after title in hope that something would spark mutual interest. It took us a couple of days, but *The Tea Planter's Wife* by Dinah Jefferies trumped every other submission. In recognition of our busy schedules, we committed to reading a few chapters a week and planned to open the floor for discussions every Friday. We started strong, but somewhere along the way our little group lost their momentum and the discussions trailed off. Evidence of our effort is available on Goodreads if you care to look and while I've yet to discuss the particulars with any of my fellows, I have a few theories as to why seemingly struck out.

Subtly isn't something I'm known for so I'm just gonna come out and say it, *The Tea Planter's Wife* is tediously slow. 'Just keep reading' became my mantra as I doggedly forced myself through the latter half of the narrative, but making the finish line awarded me no satisfaction. In point of fact, finishing the book made

the experience even worse. When I stalled after chapter nineteen, I could speculate over the grand revelations that might be delivered in final climatic chapters... having finished the book, I can't erase or reimagine the feeble culmination of Gwen's experiences or the crushing sense of disappointment that was left in its wake.

Each member of the cast enjoys a moment or two of genuine intrigue, but taken as a collective whole Jefferies' characterizations struck me as exceedingly thin. Every time I thought I was connecting with someone, that individual would either disappear from the narrative or sink into an extended period of self-pitying introspection. My eyes would glaze over, I'd groan, debate abandoning the book, berate myself for considering the notion, let fly a decidedly British expletive and force myself to keep going, but I suppose that admission is neither here nor there in the scheme of things.

Thematically, I felt Jefferies presentation insightful, but heavy-handed. Race relations in Ceylon are an integral part of Jefferies' story, but I felt the Hoopers were forced into awkward situations in order for the author to explore social tensions of the day. The couple is preoccupied with their personal and professional lives for chapters at a time, far removed from the common Tamil and Sinhalese inhabitants of their community, but their existence is unnaturally punctuated by prejudice and while I appreciated what the author was trying to convey, I couldn't help feeling the final product fractured and incohesive.

As stated, I can't speak for Heather, Stephanie or Magdalena, but I personally struggled a great deal with *The Tea Planter's Wife*. I did not enjoy the time I spent with this piece and would have great difficulty recommending it to other readers.

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## DeB MaRtEnS says

\*Thank you to Crown Publishing and NetGalley, for the advance copy of *The Tea Planter's Wife*. It's expected publication date is September 12, 2016 in North America. Reserve your copy!

Dinah Jeffries takes us on a journey to Ceylon, once a British Protectorate and home to the English who travelled the seas to find their fortune on large tea plantations, coddled by Indian waitstaff in luxurious surroundings, served by a huge cheap labour force in their fields and drying rooms but often caught precariously isolated in the beautiful rural surroundings with few other Europeans for support.

It is into this highly atmospheric setting that the newly wedded naïve, gorgeous violet-eyed Gwen Hooper joins her handsome husband Laurence, giddy with love and aching to bed the man whose body gave her so much pleasure during their short wedded month in England. The customs followed by her husband and his sister Verity and intractable rules of Nick MacGregor, the plantation manager are puzzling, but with no context to go on Gwen tries to quietly adjust her sometimes perceived interfering behaviour. In 1925, ladylike decorum is expected of a good wife and that includes not questioning her husband's decisions.

Befriending Laurence's former ayah is not to be considered. Gwen begins to realize that there is a strict racial divide between the British Colonists, the Indian Tamils who are indentured servants and the citizens of Ceylon, the Sinhalese. Coloured and Whites are not meant to mix; treatment available is vastly different and the ruling British population have a standard of respect which only includes themselves.

*The Tea Planter's Wife* has an almost gothic aura, with its secrets around the death of Laurence's first wife, the truly nasty personality of the snide Verity, the mysterious ayah Naveena, the chic but predatory ex-mistress Christina Bradshaw and the smoothly charming artist Ravi Ravasinghe. On the plantation there is a sense of perpetual foreboding, the lush property rife with snakes and entangling branches, unusual odours,

restless natives, stories of political uprisings and social outings which simmer with heat, luxurious wardrobes, outrageous quantities of alcoholic beverages, and steamy flirtation. For the couple, a happy birth is expected but Gwen is forced to deliver under unusual circumstances... Will the truth ever emerge? 1929 brings the stock market crash in America, changing markets, duress.

The attitudes of the times and place are very well depicted, and are representative of a less-than-favourable period of racism in the history of British Colonialism. E. M. Forster famously wrote "A Passage to India", in 1924, which featured the dangers of innocent friendship between an Indian and Briton, which "The Tea Planter's Wife" reflects. Significant to the era, in contrast to modern times, are the lack of openness between husband and wife, the poor communication and the very fixed gender roles. These propel the story in dramatic ways, heightening the emotions and complexity of the very well-drawn characters.

Ultimately, "The Tea Planter's Wife" is a love story set in an exotic place, a period piece that acknowledges the damage of racist policies in British Ceylon nearly a century ago. Importantly the novel also confirms that, as it did for our Gwen and Laurence in the end, the grace of understanding and acceptance blossom when truth and love are allowed to come first.

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### **Dale Harcombe says**

Nineteen year old Gwendoline sets out for Ceylon to meet up with her new husband. She initially finds him very different to what he had been in London. She struggles to deal with the changes, as well as the different culture and attitudes towards Sinhalese and Tamil people. Never having been to this part of the world, I particularly enjoyed the setting of Ceylon and the insights into life on a tea plantation and the making of tea. The novel also covers the difficulties and problems of different races and the treatment racist attitudes reveal. Gwen finds herself surrounded by secrets. Ultimately she has one of her own that almost destroys her and her marriage. While I enjoyed aspects of the story I struggled to relate to Gwen and the choices she makes and I think that coloured my view of the book as a whole. Apart from feeling angry at times at the treatment meted out to some characters, for me it remained a story and one where I was not emotionally invested in the main characters. Liked it without loving it.

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### **Jeanette says**

Too long. Too many insipid and under IQ'd people. Beautiful place, lush descriptions, time period that jazzed and yet with all 3 of those elements, the characters were mere outlines.

Ceylon and the tea lines, the "pluckers", the severe cultural and racial divides, the horticulture possibilities! With all of that in such high tide levels, you'd think she could have gotten the protagonists and especially some of the under characters to seem actual, real. For me, not at all.

This might have been written for a much younger audience that is enthralled by the physical and sexual variables of the romance in the new marriage, or the possible love affairs in the romance genre sense? Ok, then- but it still seems more weird than scorched.

Slight spoiler ahead- do not read further if plot particulars distress you.

The husband not telling the wife of the first marriage and birth circumstances? Gwen reacting to the second

twin's birth in the way she did? Her ayah's alliance to that furtive plan? Just too many factors which didn't add up. How could Gwen be that dumb? Of course, it is possible- but huh!

Until the point where everyone left her there to give birth- I could swallow the grains of salt. But after that, although I read it? I continued because I was incredulous as much as I was entertained.

This is not historical fiction, IMHO. Nor is it a book that reads like its trailer. It's more towards the far-fetched romance. Jefferies could have done so much more with that fauna and made some of the characters like Fran and Verity seem real. They were closer to a stereotype. The American woman WAS a stereotype. And Savi himself, the most foggy facade of all. No more for me from this source.

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## **Erin says**

In the 1920's a 19 year old Englishwoman, Gwen(Gwendolyn) arrives in Ceylon(Sri Lanka) to join her older husband, Lawrence at his tea plantation after a whirlwind romance. Gwen struggles to adjust to her new role as a wife and mistress of a very large plantation. The atmosphere is a little reminiscent of Daphne du Maurier's Rebecca, as secrets still hide the true demise of Lawrence's first wife, Caroline, and their infant son, Thomas. In addition, Lawrence is reluctant to share with his youthful wife, the day to day business of running a plantation. Soon family secrets, emotional heartbreak, and troublesome sister-in-laws threaten to bring down the house of cards.

I have to be honest and admit that I probably read this book too close to other similar type stories, such as, The Girl and the Sunbird: A beautiful, epic story of love, loss and hope, The Tea Planter's Daughter, and the The Planter's Bride to really appreciate the true gem that this story conveys. Although I felt invested enough in the story that I wanted to follow the characters to the end, I did also feel that the story was predictable in many places.

**Thanks to NetGalley and Crown Publishing for an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.**

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## **Tonkica says**

Realno brižnih 2.5

Dosadno.. :-/ Kao da gledam niskobudžetni tv film, ili neku od onih turskih serija. Joj! :-(

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