



A Cup of Tea: A Novel of 1917

By Amy Ephron

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Rosemary Fell was born into privilege. She has wealth, well-connected friends, and a handsome fiance, Philip Alsop. Finally she has everything she wants.

It is then, in a moment of beneficence, that Rosemary invites Eleanor Smith, a penniless young woman she sees under a streetlamp in the rain, into her home for a cup of tea. While there, Rosemary sees Eleanor exchange an unmistakable look with Philip, and she sends Eleanor on her way. But she cannot undo this chance encounter, and it leads to a tempestuous and all-consuming love triangle — until the tides of war throw all their lives off balance.

Inspired by a classic Katherine Mansfield short story, A Cup of Tea engages with its vivid — and often amusing — cast of characters, wonderful period detail, brilliant evocation of the uncertain days of World War I, and delightfully spare and picturesque sense of story.

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A Cup of Tea: A Novel of 1917 By Amy Ephron Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #992372 in Books
- Published on: 2005-06-28
- Released on: 2005-06-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.13" h x .51" w x 5.00" l, .34 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 224 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A Cup of Tea adds a touch of class--and a love triangle--to the classic theme of parallel lives and their accidental crossing. New York City, in the uncertain days of World War I, is home to Rosemary Fells, who is the sort of woman with the time to strike stunning poses and rearrange her curls; Eleanor Smith, whom Rosemary finds under a street lamp, miserable and shivering, is certainly not. Miss Fells indulges a whim of beneficence, whisking "the creature" home to share warmth, tea, and a change of clothing. Once clean and dry--fortified with sandwiches and brandy--young Eleanor and Rosemary's fiancé meet in the hallway and exchange a look, the kind of look that will forever change the course of their lives.

A Cup of Tea is a well-crafted, terse novel that reads like a good short story. It's a refreshing step back to yesterday, a time when the fates picnicked on the glass slopes of privilege.

From School Library Journal

YA. Rosemary Fell, privileged and accustomed to having all that she wants, is set to marry Philip Alsop. Of the same social class, Philip struggled years to build his own shipping concern into a success after the death of his father. Now their future together seems to promise happiness. Then Rosemary invites Eleanor Smith home with her, offering the seemingly penniless young woman temporary shelter from the weather. Instead, Philip instantly falls in love with her and the star-crossed love pulls all three characters into a dramatic, sorrowful ending. Ephron writes short, intense chapters, yet allows room for emotions and imagination to expand fully. She maintains interest by ending the chapters exactly at the next eventful point in the story, making the novel a natural page-turner. Sustaining the tension between the characters, while subtly interweaving more complexities of the plot, the author builds towards the intense conclusion. Using precise historical details of 1917 New York society, from clothing to moral attitudes, Ephron captures the ambiance of the era as well as the differences in lifestyles between the wealthy and working classes. Pam Johnson, Fairfax County Public Library, VA
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From Library Journal

Ephron (*Biodegradable Soap*, LJ 4/91) spins this tale of romance in New York City circa 1917. Wealthy society lady Rosemary Fell is engaged to marry Philip Alsop. On a rainy afternoon after shopping, Rosemary spots Eleanor, an apparently homeless woman, huddled in the cold. Thinking she is being charitable, Rosemary invites Eleanor home for a cup of tea. When Philip comes home and meets Eleanor, Rosemary notices a spark of interest in Philip's eye and promptly sends her on her way. It is too late?Philip's romantic feelings have been kindled. He begins to see Eleanor while continuing his marriage plans with Rosemary. The betrothed are married ahead of schedule as Philip is to be shipped to Europe to fight in the war. The story of their love triangle continues to unfold to a surprising end. Based on the Katherine Mansfield short story, this brief yet direct novel about duty and honor makes for engrossing reading. Recommended for most public libraries.
-?Robin Nesbitt, Hilltop Branch Lib., Columbus, Ohio
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Roxie Spencer:

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