

The Toorak Jackpot

Rosemary Macindoe

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Sweet surprises and gems of life observations shine through in The Toorak Jackpot.

Rosemary Macindoe's *The Toorak Jackpot* is a touching parable about the true meaning of wealth.

When Bert discovers that an anonymous benefactor has given him ten million dollars, he gives up his job as a successful shoe salesman to assume his role as a prince in the Melbourne suburb of Toorak. What ensues is a topsy-turvy series of events as Bert struggles with the new extravagances in his life and the dilemmas—emotional and spiritual—that they create.

Using Bert's transformation from a happy and hardworking Italian Australian to a fun-loving millionaire who struggles to find meaning in his life, *The Toorak Jackpot* effectively explores the meaning of wealth on tangible and intangible levels. Australian culture is solidly if somewhat stereotypically represented by colloquialisms from "mate" to "dag," views of Australian stores, references to the beer-drinking prime minister, and Bert's own focus on beer drinking and his laid-back attitude toward the changes in his life.

While there are plenty of secondary characters, they are not fully actualized. Many rest on stereotypes and simply serve as vehicles for the plot, as with stockbroker Leslie Murkie, whose stilted dialogue detracts from the flow of the narrative. Bert, however, is an intriguing and affable character. He is deftly developed through his actions, his gentlemanly behavior, his corny jokes, and his desire to help Louie Goldberg, a man depressed after the death of his son years before.

Bert is also sympathetic because he is deeply flawed in his conflicting desires: to be a purposeful millionaire but not a philanthropist; to be idle but also have purpose in his life. His transformation, coupled with the mystery behind his inheritance, is heartwarming and adds to the spirit of the story as a parable that delivers a message of good karma with charm. Entertaining observations on life are also poignant, such as when a television show host persuades Bert to be on his show by telling him, "Everyone's life is a political act, Prince Bert."

The wordiness of the narrative conflicts with the simplicity of the plot, though, overwhelming the story with lengthy descriptions. Bert's rambling and often repetitive thoughts do not always add to the story, as when he has a run-in with his ex-wife, contemplates his chances of getting married again, and draws comparisons between himself and Prince Charles.

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MAYA FLEISCHMANN (September 19, 2016)

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