



The Grandmothers

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The Grandmothers is a collection of stories that has author Doris Lessing's signature over all of them, but the resulting whole is an uneven one. The title story concerns Roz and Lil, two childhood friends who fall in love with each other's sons but years later decide to end their affairs so their sons can marry and move on with their lives. Their daughters-in-law eventually learn about it and are horrified. In another story, "Victoria and the Staveney's," Victoria is a poor black woman who has a child, Mary, by a white man from a well-to-do family. As Mary grows, Victoria has to decide whether taking advantage of the resources that Mary's father has access to, so that Mary is the only black child at an all-white upper-class school, is worth it.

Three of the four stories deal with various aspects of love and the consequences that eventually result, but Lessing presents that love as a pipe dream of happiness. The fourth story, "The Reason For It," feels out of place and has the same plot and writing style that Lessing has used before in other science fiction novels such as *Shikasta: re, colonised planet 5* (1979). All four stories at times have a feeling of melodrama rather than realism; it is as if the characters say and do things only because they are convenient to Lessing's plot. And sadly, it seems as if each novel is a short story dragged out too long.

Lessing's hard-core fans may enjoy the book immensely, but it lacks the depth and vision of her better work.

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