



Tea gardens

By Fiona McIntosh

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Genre & subject

Fiction

Women physicians

India

Man-woman relationships

Synopsis

Spirited Doctor Isla Fenwick is determined to work at the coalface of medicine in India before committing to life as a dutiful wife. With hopes of making a difference in the world, she sails to Calcutta to set up a midwifery clinic. There she will be forced to question her beliefs, her professionalism and her romantic loyalties. On a desperate rescue mission to save the one person who needs her the most, she travels into the foothills of the Himalayas to a tea plantation outside Darjeeling. At the roof of the world, where heaven and earth collide, Isla will be asked to pay the ultimate price for her passions. From England's seaside town of Brighton to India's slums of Calcutta and the breathtaking Himalayan Mountains, this is a wildly exciting novel of heroism, heartache and healing, by the bestselling author of *The Chocolate Tin*.

Author biography

Fiona McIntosh (born 1960) is an author of adult and children's books who lives in Australia. She was born in Brighton, England and between the ages of three and eight, travelled a lot to Africa due to her father's work. At the age of nineteen, she travelled first to Paris and later to Australia, where she has lived ever since. In 2007, she released a crime novel, *Bye Bye Baby*, under the pseudonym of Lauren Crow, however the pen name has since been dropped for the republished edition of *Bye Bye Baby* and for the sequel, *Beautiful Death*.

She co-founded an award-winning travel magazine with her husband, which they ran for fifteen years while raising their twin sons before she became a full-time author. Fiona roams the world researching and drawing inspiration for her novels, and runs a series of highly respected fiction masterclasses. She calls South Australia home.

Discussion starters

- Is The Tea Gardens a story of true love or devastating betrayal?
- Do you think Jove was kind, clever or cunning when he allowed Isla to follow her heart to India? Could you appreciate his motives?
- As a physician, Isla is driven by an intense need to save others. In what ways does she learn that this is not always possible?
- Matron tells Isla that rank is given but respect is earned. Do you think Isla earns respect during her time in India?
- Do you agree that faith is far stronger than medicine?
- In his letter, Jove tells Isla to 'leave nothing behind' in India. Was this good advice, in your view?
- 'No one ever leaves Kangchenjunga unchanged.' Discuss.
- What is the significance of the book's remote location?
- Identify some of the many different ways in which tea is used throughout the novel.
- Do you agree with Saxon when he says, 'You can still make a good life even if you're not with that person you truly love'?
- How did Isla change through her experiences?
- Do you find Saxon the hero or the villain of this story?
- Is this a book about people maintaining control of their emotions – or losing control of them?
- If you were Isla, would you have chosen Saxon or Jove?

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