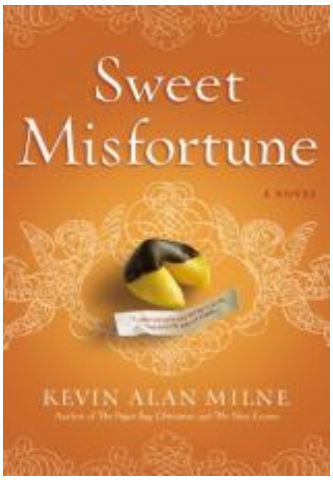
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Sweet Misfortune

by Kevin Alan Milne



About the Book

Sophie owns a chocolate shop where she sells Misfortune Cookies --- dipped in bitter chocolate they contain messages she handwrites each day such as "Your car seems fine now, but just wait...it will eventually be a source of frustration and unexpected delay." What starts as a gimmick, turns into a surprise hit with customers. But when her ex-fiancée moves back to their small Washington town, he is surprised at how bitter and unhappy Sophie has become. He proposes a bet --- she must place an ad in the paper that simply states "Wanted: Happiness.

Discussion Guide

1. Sophie?s past is littered with tragedy. Given what she?s been through, is her pessimism about the future justified? What tragedies have you faced in life, and how do they compare to Sophie?s? How did you manage to put the past behind you?

2. One of the ways Sophie grows as an individual is in learning to accept?and perhaps even embrace --- the bitter with the sweet. In real life, how hard is that to do? Have there been ?misfortunes? in your life that you?ve ended up being grateful for in the long run?

3. Garrett was out of Sophie?s life for an entire year before showing up unexpectedly at her store, having never told her why he left in the first place. Put yourself in Sophie?s shoes. Upon seeing him, how would you react? Would you give him a chance to explain himself? Would you still want to know why he left? Or would you try to get him out of the store as quickly as possible?

4. What do you make of Jim, the homeless man? At one point, in reference to people in their ?shiny cars, driving to their big, warm houses,? Jim poses the question, ?Are they happier than me?? Are they? At what point do you think wealth either contributes to or detracts from being happy?

5. On their first date, Garrett makes a distinction between a ?romantic? and a ?hopeless romantic.? Cynics might argue that any romantic is, by definition, hopeless. Do you agree with Garrett or the cynics? Or neither? Why?

6. Given what he learned about the past, was Garrett justified in calling off the wedding? What would you have done in this situation?

7. Why does Garrett fall for Sophie? Can you understand the attraction from his point of view? Given his previous knowledge of her, should he have been more forthcoming from the start? If not, at what point in their relationship should he have come clean?

8. Why does Evalynn fear motherhood? Do you think Ellen, her foster mom, was right in keeping certain things from her?

9. How are Sophie and Evalynn?s pasts similar? How are their reactions to the past different?

10. How does the character of Alex contribute to the overall theme of happiness? Do you have close association with someone who has Down Syndrome? What are your feelings about Alex and his role in the novel?

11. In what ways does Sophie change over the course of the story? In what ways does she stay the same?

12. When was the last time you had a fortune cookie? Did you read the fortune aloud to friends and family? Did you save it? What is the best fortune you have ever received in a fortune cookie? What would your reaction be if the next fortune cookie you ate contained one of Sophie?s misfortunes? What was your favorite misfortune, and why?

13. What is happiness?

Author Bio

Kevin Milne was born in Portland, Oregon on June 13, 1973. As with the main character of his book, **The Paper Bag Christmas**, Kevin?s father, Robert Milne, was in the middle of his final examination of dental school when he was notified that Kevin?s entrance into the world was imminent. Robert left his exam, ran over to the nearby delivery room just in time to see his son born, and then raced back to finish the test. Robert and his wife, Diana, toyed for a full week with the idea of naming their child Molar in honor of Robert?s favorite tooth, but reason eventually won out and baby Kevin was taken home from the hospital.

Eighteen years later Kevin graduated from Sherwood High School in Sherwood, Oregon, a small country town outside of Portland. In college, Mr. Milne studied anything and everything that caught his interest. In his first two years as an undergraduate student he changed majors nearly a dozen times, studying such varied fields as film, journalism,

communications, philosophy, pre-dentistry, advertising, pre-law, pre-medicine, political science, and German, then finally earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. Just about the only thing he didn?t study was business, which, ironically, is what he chose to pursue in graduate school, earning an MBA at Pennsylvania State University in 2000.

Today, Kevin is a business professional by day, an author by night, and a husband and father around the clock. He and his wife Rebecca were married in Washington D.C. in 1995. They now reside in Kevin?s hometown of Sherwood, Oregon, where they are the proud parents of five children: Mikayla, Kamry, Mary, Emma, & Kyler (aka "the boy").

Chief among Kevin?s personal interests is international travel. To date he has spent time in Austria, Bermuda, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Singapore, Slovenia, and Ukraine.

Mr. Milne has also lived in many diverse places since his dental-exam birth in 1973, including Oregon, Washington DC, California, Hawaii, Utah, Austria, Croatia, Pennsylvania, New York, and Vermont.

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