



A Divided Inheritance

Deborah Swift

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A family divided by fortune. A country divided by faith.

London 1609...

Elspet Leviston's greatest ambition is to continue the success of her father Nathaniel's lace business. But her dreams are thrown into turmoil with the arrival of her mysterious cousin Zachary Deane – who has his own designs on Leviston's Lace.

Zachary is a dedicated swordsman with a secret past that seems to invite trouble. So Nathaniel sends him on a Grand Tour, away from the distractions of Jacobean London. Elspet believes herself to be free of her hot-headed relative but when Nathaniel dies her fortunes change dramatically. She is forced to leave her beloved home and go in search of Zachary - determined to claim back from him the inheritance that is rightfully hers.

Under the searing Spanish sun, Elspet and Zachary become locked in a battle of wills. But these are dangerous times and they are soon embroiled in the roar and sweep of something far more threatening, sending them both on an unexpected journey of discovery which finally unlocks the true meaning of family .

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A Divided Inheritance is a breathtaking adventure set in London just after the Gunpowder Plot and in the bustling courtyards of Golden Age Seville.

A Divided Inheritance Details

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Author : Deborah Swift

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From Reader Review A Divided Inheritance for online ebook

Heather says

I really enjoyed the juxtaposition of Roman Catholics being persecuted in Jacobean England in comparison to Catholicism being the dominant faith and power in Spain at the same time. I really enjoyed the character development of both Elspet and Zachary throughout the book, it felt quite natural. This is my second Swift book & she does always like to end her books on a happy note it seems, no matter how bleak the chapters before it are.

Shannon says

Well. This book was another disappointment. It wasn't awful, but it wasn't that great either.

I had three main issues. Parts of the story and plot seemed disparate, like they really should have been in separate novels. The main characters were unsympathetic and uninteresting. Lastly, the pacing was uneven.

The story starts in Jacobean England where Elspet and her father, Nathaniel, run a lace making business. Their peaceful existence is stirred up by the appearance of Zachary Deane, Nathaniel's bastard son. Zachary is proclaimed heir to the lace business, but because of his wild trouble-making behavior is sent out on a world tour. While Zachary is on tour, Nathaniel dies. Elspet then travels to Spain to find Zachary and fight for some control of her own over the family business.

Most of the rest of novel is set in Spain at an exclusive swordsmanship/fencing school. And the rest of the plot is mostly concerned with the Morisco population (those of Islamic/Moorish descent in Spain). My issue was that the two elements seemed to be arbitrarily smashed together. I felt the novel should have just focused on the Spanish fencing school and the Morisco persecution (which were both quite interesting). And then perhaps the lace business (which sadly wasn't discussed much) and the drama surrounding its inheritance could have been further developed into its own novel.

As it is, I have a hard time caring for Zachary or Elspet. Zachary is a rogue, and not the fun witty kind. He is dishonest and grasping and generally unpleasant (view spoiler). I wished him ill for most of the story. Elspet is more sympathetic, simply because many of her troubles stem from simply being female in olden times. However, her main character trait seems to be hard-headed persistence, and she's not terribly likable. Both are a bit boring really. As far as I'm concerned the passionate Morisco, Luisa, and the enigmatic master of the school, Alvarez, needed to be the protagonists.

The pacing also seemed to a bit off. I just kept reading, reading, reading and little happened. Zachary continues his quest to become a master swordsman and overcome his Napoleon complex. Elspet follows Zachary around and tries to convince him to give her back charge of the family business. Rinse, repeat. And then at the end, the action picks up to an almost absurd degree considering the book's previous pace (view spoiler).

If you are a big historical fiction buff and don't mind a less than compelling read as long as it covers a little explored historical topic, then this might be the book for you.

Received a copy from Goodreads First Reads.

The Lit Bitch says

Swift has consistently impressed me with her writing abilities. The first novel of her's that I read was *The Gilded Lily* and I was captivated by all the historic research she did for it. She wrote knowledgeably about the period and the different plot angles in that novel and with this new novel, it met my expectations in every way.

Swift continued to demonstrate her knowledge of the period and showed her specialized research particularly with the lace business and the religious controversies of both England and Spain. I loved how Swift moved the setting to Spain for part of the novel. It gave the novel a unique exotic flavor that I couldn't help but eat up!

It's challenging enough creating a vivid, rich historic novel set in one location, but to do it in two locations and do it so superbly is nothing short of amazing!

This book had a lot of action sequences in it too. There is a lot of fencing and sword fighting which is something I haven't read a lot of. I don't know a lot about the art of fencing but after reading this novel I do! Again I praise Swift's ability to construct great details for the reader.

The only issue I had with the novel was the beginning and set up to the story were a little slow going. It took me a few chapters to get into the novel which was more that I was expecting. I would have liked to have had a little less back story and a little more action to begin but overall it was a great read and a real treat for historic fiction lovers!

See my full review [here](#)

Jenny Q says

3.5 Stars. Deborah Swift is a master at bringing seventeenth-century England to life. And not the glitz and glamour of kings and queens and courtiers, but the diorama of everyday life, of merchants and tradesmen, of husbands and wives and mothers and fathers, of servants and street urchins and criminals. *A Divided Inheritance* brings us into that world once more and introduces us to Elspet Leviston, daughter of the successful owner of Leviston Lace. She and her father have lived humbly and quietly since the death of her mother, and Elspet is perfectly content to handle the affairs of the house while also helping handle the affairs of the business. She enjoys the sense of purpose and freedom she finds in being included in the business, and though her father is not given to displays of affection, she is secure in the knowledge that she is first in his heart--until the day his long-lost illegitimate son shows up on their doorstep. Suddenly, Zachary Deane becomes the center of her father's world, usurping Elspet's place in the business and in her father's estimation. Elspet finds herself relegated to a "woman's domain," her opinion no longer welcome in business matters, and even worse, her father becomes determined to marry her off to a man she's never met. Her resentment and suspicions about Zachary grow by the day, but her concerns fall on her father's deaf ears.

Zachary is delighted to suddenly find himself the center of such a prosperous world. The old man who thinks

he's his father dotes on him, anxious to make up for lost time, and Zachary is perfectly happy to let him. But instead of focusing his attentions on the lace business, his new-found wealth serves to spur on his passion for fencing, fighting, and dueling. After one too many scrapes with the law, his father decides to send him on a grand tour of Europe to make connections for the business. Elspet fumes at this lavish reward for ill behavior, but she is powerless to do anything. But not long after Zachary's departure, a series of mishaps places the lace business in peril, and one final blow proves to be more than her father's heart can handle. Alone in the world, Elspet is incredulous to discover that her father left everything but a share in his business to Zachary. Elspet doesn't even own the house she lives in, and she is now reliant on Zachary for everything. She literally can't do anything without Zachary's approval. But Zachary is nowhere to be found, having departed from his itinerary to seek out the best sword makers and fencing masters in Spain. Elspet determines to take her future into her own hands and makes the perilous journey by sea and by land to Seville, where she finally catches up with her ne'er-do-well "brother." But her pleas for cooperation are lost on Zachary, who wants nothing to do with his shrewish and disapproving sister now that he has his father's money. Elspet finds herself in a desperate fight for her livelihood in a strange land on the verge of a religious war as the Spanish king seeks to remove all Muslims from the country. With the help of a few unexpected new allies, and with Zachary slowly coming to understand there is more to life than fighting and revenge, they will both discover hidden truths within themselves and the strength and courage to stand up for what is just and make amends for what is not.

Elspet and Zachary are stars in this novel with wonderfully drawn personalities and character arcs, but the time spent on many lesser characters they encounter detracts from them and their central story a bit. As in all of Ms. Swift's novels, the description is vibrant, the historical detail is fantastic, and the quality of the writing is superb. But I thought the pacing was off in this one. In the beginning, I found myself burning through the pages as I got to know Elspet, but I found my interest waning for most of the middle section of the novel. The narrative starts shifting back and forth in time and shifts to new characters right at the point where I was expecting the story to really kick into gear, but instead it sort of expanded and unraveled. Things picked up again once Elspet and Zachary met up in Spain, and there was a very exciting sequence of events leading up to the ending, but then the ending itself left me a bit dissatisfied. What I had hoped would happen didn't happen, and I was left without a real feeling of closure. And I like closure. So while this isn't going to be my favorite Deborah Swift novel, I can still recommend it as a worthwhile read for its unique story and impeccable historical flavor.

Elizabeth Lloyd says

This is the story of two people, Elspet Leviston, responsible daughter of a lace dealer in Jacobean London and Zachary Deane, the illegitimate son of a poor Spanish woman whose bullying brothers have taught him to lie and steal. When Elspet's father suddenly brings Zachary into their household, usurping her position in the family business, she is horrified and as a dutiful daughter considers marriage to an apparently pleasant suitor. Her relief when Zachary sets off on a grand tour is swiftly removed on her father's sudden death and her world turns upside down when she hears the conditions of his will.

From the calm everyday life in London, where only the need to conceal their Catholic faith disturbs them, Elspet sets out across Europe to find Zachary and sort out her future. Meanwhile, Zachary is discovering his true purpose in life, studying with Senor Alvarez, a Master of Fencing. It is difficult to like Zachary at first but easy to understand him and as the plot develops so does his character. Elspet also changes when she reaches Spain. Her circumstances deteriorate and her way of life is completely different but the charismatic Senor Alvarez also guides her future. And then she and Zachary find themselves caught up in the terrible

expulsion of the Moriscos, the Moors who had settled in Seville.

Deborah Swift's historical research is impeccable, grounding this unusual story in the troubled world of early 17th century Spain and questioning the role of women and the place of religion in society but this is not a learned tome. It is an exciting, passionate story, full of vibrant, realistic characters and thrilling events. I could not put this book down!

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

At first, I wasn't sure what to make of Deborah Swift's *A Divided Inheritance*. She'd come highly recommended, but a hundred pages in I couldn't help wondering when I was going to be swept off my feet. It took a while, but somewhere around the midpoint I began to really appreciate this story and by the end, was lost in the world she'd created within these pages.

Despite the straightforward jacket description, *A Divided Inheritance* is a multilayered and elaborate fiction that touches on a wide variety of complex concepts and intrigue. The massive scope is mind-boggling, but when all is said and done, I think Swift does an impeccable job pulling the various elements of the narrative together.

Historically speaking, I was fascinated with the story of Moriscos in Spain and how it contrasted with that of the Catholics in England. As a reader, I really admired Swift's unprejudiced and gentle handling of the material, how she was able to tackle something as personal as religion without overwhelming her audience with spirituality and ritual.

I was similarly drawn to the detailed descriptions of swordplay. The fight scenes are not overdone, yet still illustrate the many nuances of the craft. From the stance a fighter must retain to the advantage gained by a particular style of blade, Swift was able to convey a real understanding of vocation and what it took to master the art of fencing.

I don't mean to downplay Swift's characters, their turbulent emotions and convoluted relationships make excellent reading material, but it was the detailed descriptions - the bustle of London's merchant class and the competitive rivalries that burned with such ferocity in the streets of Seville - that I will remember when I look back on this piece.

Elegantly written, *A Divided Inheritance* brings the uncertainty of the seventeenth gloriously to life in an engaging tale of determination, tenacity and family loyalty.

Jo Barton says

London 1609...

A Divided Inheritance is set initially in Jacobean England when distrust of family, neighbour and friend had reached its zenith. Religious persecution was rife throughout Europe and in England hidey holes for Catholic

priests could be found in the most illicit of places. Helping to run the family lace business with her father, Nathaniel, Elspet Leviston's life is about to be turned completely upside down by the arrival of her mysterious cousin Zachary Deane who has his own ideas for the family business. When Nathaniel dies unexpectedly, Elspet and Zachary are forced into a battle of will to determine which of them will have the inheritance of Leviston's Lace. However, Zachary has disappeared into Spain, and Elspet has only a limited amount of time to track him down, before she risks losing everything she and her father worked so hard to attain.

As with Deborah Swift's previous novels, the research and fine attention to detail is impeccable. The Jacobean world is revealed as a scheming hotchpotch of family rivalry and religious persecution which takes the reader from the stark and drear world of Jacobean London, through to the sweltering heat and colour of Catholic Spain, when the inquisition lingered on corners and the dreadful expulsion of Muslims forced families apart in the most horrendous of circumstances.

Initially, the book appears to get off to a slow start with little seeming to happen, but then about a third of the way into the story, and particularly when the focus shifts to Spain, the narration becomes livelier. The strength of the story telling and the vivid imagery of seventeenth century Seville is quite compelling. The day to day life in Spain made for fascinating reading; I especially liked the revealing of intricate details of swordsmanship at the fencing school.

European history and particularly Spanish history is not an area I am familiar with, so to have a story which seeks to shed light on some of the more disturbing events that happened in seventeenth century Spain whilst at the time keeping control of an intricate and complex family drama, made this an enjoyable and fascinating read.

I am sure that fans of well written and factually accurate historical fiction will love it as much as I did.

Kendal says

I love historical fiction and *A Divided Inheritance* is one of the reasons why. It is so rich in detail, drama and vivid imagery. I felt like I was traveling through Europe. Deborah Swift ably explores family, loyalty and duty in 17th century England; at a time, where Catholicism was forbidden in one country and violently enforced in another.

Elspet is our heroine in this novel. She is strong; but innocent. She has been given a difficult situation and very valiantly finds her path. She has to continually deal with a man's shortcoming; whether it be her father, Hugh, or Zachary. However, she is strong and prevails.

Zachary is on a journey of self-discovery. His life prior to meeting Elspet and her father is very sad and full of abuse and violence. When he finds kindness but how does he deal with it? Poorly. Watching Elspet and Zachary trying to salvage their life is very interesting and compelling.

Religious intolerance is another aspect to this book. The fear and anxiety prevails throughout. The Inquisition is completely incomprehensible. I will never understand it. As well, as the intolerance in England. Elspet's friar's cellar instilled so much imagery in my mind. I couldn't imagine having to practice my faith in secret. Same with the Moriscos in Spain. So much fear is just so sad.

A Divided Inheritance is a wonderful book full a rich historical detail. It is journey that definitely needs to be followed.

Deborah says

To say that this book has been thoroughly researched and soundly set in the 1600's, London, would be an understatement. Richly detailed in every way, this is a novel that pleases even the staunchest historical fiction aficionado. Ms Swift is never out of the element of Jacobean England, and I dare anyone to catch her in a flaw!

Not only is this a resplendent historical, but it is also a gorgeously written story of love and mystery. I fell in love with the characters, as well as their turbulent relationship. I think that's what makes a book truly enjoyable to read. The side story of the lace and embroidery was fascinating to me, as well, since I am a needlewoman, having spent over 40 years practicing needlepoint and cross stitch myself. Just an added bonus.

Deborah Swift's writing style is reminiscent of "The Count of Monte Cristo" in its swash-buckling and drama. There is a timelessness about it. She is an author who stands alone in historical fiction because of her sense not only of scene and setting, but of characterization, plot, and authentic descriptions of costuming.

If you're looking for a novel that will bring you a few hours of authenticity, escape and mystery, this is the one. Ms Swift knows how to engage a reader. You'll find yourself swept up in the love story, the romance and the beauty of London and Spain...

5 stars Deborah/TheBookishDame

Sharon M. Turner says

Elspeth and Zachary

Elspeth finds out that her father has divided her inheritance with a total stranger who her father tells her is her cousin but later is told that he is her half-brother. In the 1600's a female has no real rights and when her father dies suddenly while her cousin-brother is on the grand tour she is left destitute. This girl has been doing all the book work for her late father and is more than capable of running his companies except for this interloper. She and the shop foreman and her maid set out for Spain. This story is extremely well written and well researched. It deserves your attention.

Holly Weiss says

My third encounter with Deborah Swift's writing, *A Divided Inheritance*, did not disappoint. In a superb integration of historical fact and plot, Deborah Swift masterfully interweaves family loyalty, religious intolerance, and adventure. We travel from lace making in rainy seventeenth century London where Catholicism is forbidden to Catholic-dominated Spain and fencing under the blistering sun.

Two very different main characters take us on their separate journeys. Elspeth's dream is to continue her father's lace making business. Troubled when mysterious cousin Zachary appears, she relaxes when her father sends him to Spain to participate in the Grand Tour in Seville. As disparate as the characters are, the book coalesces into an adventure you will not want to miss.

For this novel, Swift steps away from her beloved England. Her insight into the Inquisition and Spain are commendable. She nimbly achieves a cross-cultural perspective as the book moves through unexpected corridors to examine the tenacity of family loyalty.

Highly recommended. For more of Deborah Swift's superb historical fiction, see *The Gilded Lily* and *The Lady's Slipper*.

Reviewed by Holly Weiss, author of *Crestmont*

Book of Secrets says

A DIVIDED INHERITANCE is the first novel by Deborah Swift I've read, and I was impressed by the rich historical details. This book paints a vivid picture of the beauty and turbulence of 17th century Spain.

The story begins in London with Elspet Leviston working with her father in his lace business, fully believing she will inherit it someday. Suddenly a man named Zachary Deane appears at their door, and Mr. Leviston introduces him as her cousin. Soon Elspet is pushed aside and told to concentrate on "womanly pursuits" while Zachary is taught the lace business. Of course, she's furious, and rightfully so.

The mysterious Zachary turns out to be an immature trouble-maker, and Elspet knows there's something from his past he's hiding. Before she can find out, Mr. Leviston sends Zachary on a "grand tour" of Europe in hopes that it will educate him and turn him into a proper gentleman. Unfortunately Elspet's father dies soon after he departs, and she's shocked to discover Zachary has inherited half of the lace business. Since she can't do anything without Zachary's approval, she sets off to find him, finally tracking him down in Seville, Spain. He'd abandoned his grand tour to take fencing lessons from a master swordsman while poor Elspet suffered. Luckily she was strong and determined, and willing to fight for what was hers.

A big part of this book focused on the horrific treatment of the Moors by the Spanish king. While Catholics in England were being oppressed, Muslims were the victims of religious persecution in Spain. For me, this was an eye-opening read.

There were a lot of characters to keep track of in this book, and at times Elspet and Zachary's story got lost in the shuffle. Still, I was thrilled at the outcome of their inheritance squabble, and I was pleased at how Zachary's character evolved over time.

A DIVIDED INHERITANCE is sure to please fans of well-researched, detailed historical fiction. And, maybe, just maybe, there's an opening for a sequel?

Rating: 3.75 Stars

Source: Review copy provided for participating in the author's book tour.

Blodeuedd Finland says

Ok so I was somewhere, I had one book with me, since I could not possibly even finish one. But yes I did read almost half of it. I was never that into it, but I read on, what else to do...

But here came the problem when I came home, I did not read then, I did not read the next day, and at the evening the next day I finally picked it up again. But it was just so...ok, only ok. I started reading some, skimming some, just wanting it to end. I had already invested time in half of it, I had spent 3 good reading days and was pissed at the book.

Zach was somewhat of an ahole.

Elsbeth was boring.

Then they were in Spain, meh, a lot happened.

Crappy ending.

I always have trouble with her books. They just are not for me

Meh, I will give it an ok. Barely!

Lynne Spreen says

What an epic! I enjoyed this from the very beginning. Particularly liked the aspect of a smart young woman trying to respect the repressive culture in which she is maturing, yet bristling at it. She senses there's more to life than running a house, and she has a head for business and even adventure, as she discovers later. The author, Deborah Swift, hints at this:

"A sensation of longing filled her chest, so strong that it made her want to stretch out to claw back that brief light (of a shooting star). It was a longing for home, but not a country to travel to, no, not that. Rather, some country deep inside herself." What thinking person hasn't felt this way at some point in life?

It's stunning how much research Swift must have done in order to include the historic details of London and Spain in the early 1600s. Good pacing, rich characters and settings, an undercurrent of feminism, and a good developmental arc for the two main characters. This is a coming of age story for the young man and woman, Zachary and Elspet, respectively, and also an exploration of an historic event based on a clash of cultures and religious intolerance. A very satisfying read.

Terry Tyler says

What a story! A masterpiece indeed.

A Divided Inheritance starts off in London, where Elspet Leviston finds herself usurped in her father's eyes by the appearance, out of nowhere, of her cousin, Zachary Deane. The story travels to Spain in the time when Muslims were being persecuted and driven out of their country, not a period of history I knew anything

about, though this didn't matter as I soon picked up exactly what was going on; however, there's a brief history at the back of the book that you might like to read first.

There were so many elements about this story that I loved, not least of all Deborah Swift's clearly intricate research and wonderful storytelling capability. It's got the lot: the bleakness of life for a young woman in the slightly impoverished middle classes, the marriage forced on her for business expansion, followed by Elspet's personal growth when she is thrown outside her secure, limited existence, tested in ways that make her alter her entire outlook on life. The story takes the reader from the dark alleys of London to the bright colour of 17th century Seville, and I loved the multi-faceted Zachary, in many ways the villain of the tale but so beautifully painted that I rooted for him throughout.

With lost love, double dealing, desperate flight in terrible circumstances and the horror of religious persecution, this is terrific, unusual novel that I think puts Deborah Swift right up there with the best and well known historical fiction writers. Highly, highly recommended.
