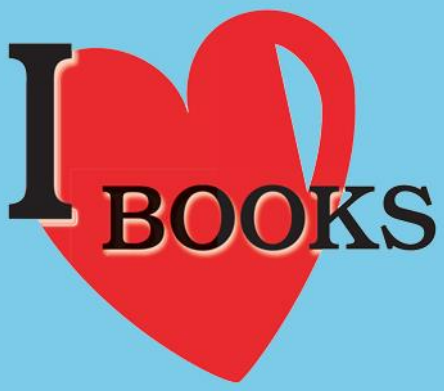


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Written by

Emma Donoghue

Illustrated by

Caroline Hadilaksano

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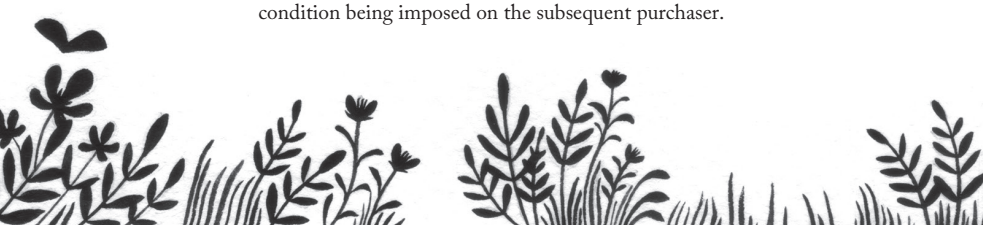
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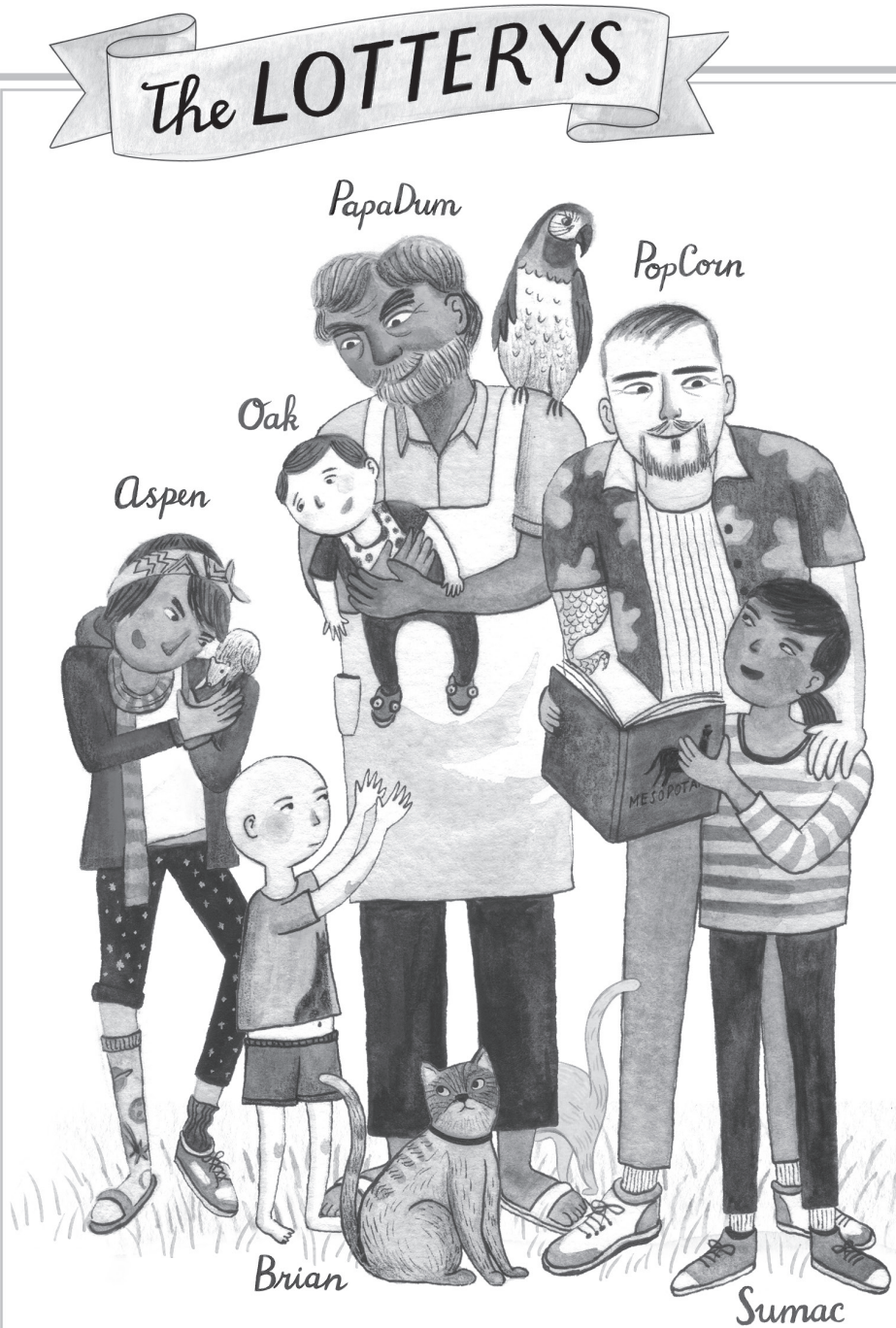




Once upon a time, a man from Delhi and a man from Yukon fell in love, and so did a woman from Jamaica and a Mohawk woman. The two couples became best friends and had a baby together. When they won the lottery, they gave up their jobs and found a big old house where their family could learn and grow . . . and grow some more.

Now Sumac Lottery (age nine) is the fifth of seven kids, all named after trees. With their four parents and five pets, they fit perfectly in the Toronto home they call Camelottery.

But the one thing in life that never changes . . . is that sooner or later things change.


The LOTTERYS
PapaDum
PopCorn
Oak
Aspen
Brian
Sumac


MaxiMum
CardaMom
FREE
SHRUGS
Wood
Catalpa
Sic

CHAPTER 1

THE DORMANT GRANDFATHER

Only eight people at breakfast today, which feels weird. (Sumac's three eldest sibs have stayed on at Camp Jagged Falls for a wilderness trip.) But she has been quite enjoying the extra space. Even though Camelottery has thirty-two rooms, you'd be surprised how often all the Lotterys seem to wind up trying to use the same toilet at the same time.

Right now, Sumac's putting blueberries on her oatmeal in the Mess – which is Lottery-speak for their yellow-walled kitchen, because a mess is the place armies eat – and no one's jogged her elbow yet: amazing. She's made sure to be on the window side of the long table, facing the same way as her sister Aspen, who bobs up and down on her

exercise ball so much that if Sumac sits across from her she feels seasick. Three of the parents are blah-blahing about the watermelon glut at the community garden, but Sumac's not really listening because she's busy planning the One-to-One Lottafun she and PopCorn are going to start today.

In May she and CardaMom spent a week on Haudenosaunee longhouses, and they built a mini one behind the Trampoline for Sumac's dolls to camp in. But this is going to be even more excellent because (a) it's all about the weird world of ancient Mesopotamia, and (b) PopCorn really plunges into things. Like their best One-to-One ever, when he and Sumac studied the history of weaving and how it led to the invention of computers, and they rounded up a bunch of kids to make a gigantic tapestry celebrating the Olympics all along the playground fence.

'What you making of blueberries?' Brian asks Sumac. (Her youngest sister used to be Briar, but last year, when she was three, she announced she was Brian.)

'A heptagon. That means seven sides.' Sumac nudges a berry into line.

'Did we ask what a heptagon is, smarty-pants?' At ten and a half, Aspen considers it her job to crush Sumac sometimes when her sister's vocabulary gets too big for its britches.

'Mines be a face,' says Brian.

'With three eyes?' Sumac examines Brian's bowl.

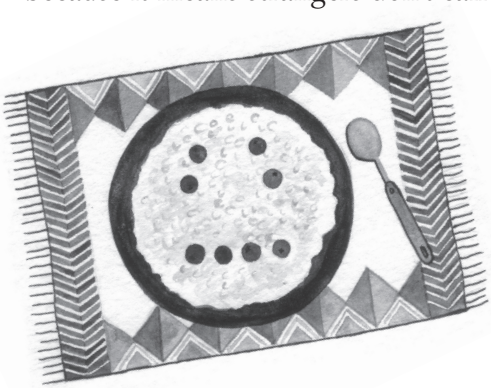
'Why not three eyes?'

'It's fine,' says Sumac, 'it's just not the normal number.'

'Normal, boremal,' chants Aspen, boinging higher on her ball, 'peculiar's coolier.'

Decisive, Brian plops another blueberry into the oatmeal. 'Four eyes, because I four.' Blueberries also make a straight line for a mouth; Brian doesn't smile unless it's a special occasion.

Her little sister's head is a pink-white golf ball, Sumac decides – with her neck the tee it's resting on. When the Lotterys got hair lice yet again, back in May, Brian fought off any parent who came near her with that foul shampoo, till Sumac offered to give her buzzed hair the same as PopCorn's. (Even though Sumac's only nine, she's the family barber, because she's the most accurate and undistractable.) Now Brian wants to keep her hair this short *all the days* because it means strangers don't call her a girl.



Oak, lolling in his high chair, does a grunty sort of chuckle.

Aspen grins at their baby brother and stops bouncing

long enough to drop another three blueberries on to the plastic plate that's Velcroed to his tray.

Sumac holds up her spoon to see if being buzzed bald would suit her too, but of course her reflection's upside down, because the spoon's con*cave* – like a cave – so it bends the light rays. She flips it around to see herself right way up on the back. Sumac happens to have more or less the same face bits as her eldest sister Catalpa, even though their ancestors come from different parts of the globe: smooth black hair and brown eyes. But it's only on Catalpa that it all adds up to beautiful, which is unfair. Sumac sticks out her tongue at her reflection and starts on her oatmeal.

PopCorn hurries into the Mess, holding his phone to his ear. 'Sure, of course, the next flight.' He must be talking to a stranger, because he sounds all serious and grown-up. Usually he puts on funny voices because he's the Court Jester of Camelottery.

PapaDum, ladling out seconds, raises his bushy eyebrows to ask what it's about. PapaDum's fifty-nine – that's the oldest in the whole family – so his eyebrows are getting monstrous, but he claims they're the right size to match his beard.

PopCorn nods at him, not smiling – which again makes him seem not himself. He slides the phone into the back pocket of the shorts he made from cutting the legs off his

favourite jeans after a chemistry experiment. 'Got to go see your grandfather, poppets,' he announces, sitting down between Aspen and CardaMom. Then he winces as if that hurt his butt and fishes the phone out again.

'Up to heaven?' Brian asks, big-eyed.

'No, that's *my* dad you're thinking of,' MaxiMum tells her.

Aspen lets out a snigger.

Sumac glares at her sister, because it's not funny that their grandfather from Jamaica's dead, even if it did happen before most of them were alive.

Aspen can't help it, though; she was born sniggering. And MaxiMum doesn't get offended. (She says she's not naturally calm and rational, like Spock in *Star Trek*; it's from doing all that yoga.)

So PopCorn must be talking about PapaDum's father, then. 'But wouldn't you just take the train if you're visiting Dada Ji in Oakville?' asks Sumac.

'I wish!' PopCorn's transferred his phone to the tiny pocket on the arm of his T-shirt, where it sticks out and waggles as he spoons up his breakfast.

'Duh,' Aspen tells her, 'he must be flying to Montreal to see Baba on the reserve.'

'Not PapaDum's dad, nor CardaMom's,' says PopCorn in an oddly flat voice. 'Mine.'

After a pause, CardaMom says, 'You know: Iain, who PopCorn goes to see in Yukon every now and then?'

Sumac checks her mental files. 'No he doesn't.'

PopCorn's eyes are on his spoon as it hunts a blueberry. 'Well, more like once in a blue moon.'

'That grandfather's not a real one,' says Aspen, lifting her feet to balance precariously on her ball. 'He's just in stories about making you chop up lots of kindling when you were small.'

Which sounds more like an evil sorcerer than a grandfather to Sumac.

'Oh, he's real enough,' says PopCorn, licking maple syrup off one knuckle. 'He just hasn't been much of a grandfather.'

'To be fair,' says CardaMom, 'he's never even met the kids.'

To be fair is one of her pet phrases, because she used to be a lawyer – the fighting-for-justice kind.

Under the table, their brown mutt, Diamond, lets out a bark for no apparent reason. She's been pining ever since the five biggest kids went to camp, and she won't cheer up till Wood's home.

Oak's trying to eat his bib. Sumac gently tugs it out of his mouth. So this fourth grandfather has been nonactivated till now, she thinks. Dormant, like a volcano. 'How come you only visit your dad once in a blue moon?'