



## **Six Metres of Pavement**

*Farzana Doctor*

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Ismail Boxwala made the worst mistake of his life one summer morning twenty years ago: he forgot his baby daughter in the back seat of his car. After his daughter's tragic death, he struggles to continue living. A divorce, years of heavy drinking, and sex with strangers only leave him more alone and isolated.

But Ismail's story begins to change after he reluctantly befriends two women: Fatima, a young queer activist kicked out of her parents' home; and Celia, his grieving Portuguese-Canadian neighbour who lives just six metres away. A slow-simmering romance develops between Ismail and Celia. Meanwhile, dangers lead Fatima to his doorstep. Each makes complicated demands of him, ones he is uncertain he can meet.

## **Six Metres of Pavement Details**

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Author : Farzana Doctor

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## From Reader Review Six Metres of Pavement for online ebook

### Nancy says

#### **Cross-posted at Outlaw Reviews and at Shelf Inflicted**

I started reading this book on the eve of my 20th wedding anniversary. It was fun getting immersed in other people's lives and problems rather than spending time pondering whether human beings are meant to spend more than 20 years together.

Ismail Boxwala is devastated by the accidental death of his baby daughter, burying his sorrow in alcohol and casual sexual encounters. His growing friendship with a grieving Portuguese widow and a homeless queer girl shifts his focus away from himself and onto helping others through their difficulties. Ismail gradually learns to process his grief and find some inner peace. This story takes place in Toronto and features a cast of unique, engaging and diverse characters going through significant changes in their lives. The pace is gentle, and while there is some drama, it shies away from intensely emotional interactions and upsetting situations. Instead, it shows how unlikely people can intersect and through friendship and understanding they can find themselves and discover meaning in their lives.

Ismail, Celia and Fatima are such well-drawn characters that they can be your friends, neighbors, or relatives. Their struggles and joys feel authentic. It was hard for me to leave them when the book ended.

This is a big-hearted, comforting and hopeful story that explores grief, aging, loneliness, rejection, identity, culture and traditions, as well as the diversity and fluidity of modern families.

Highly recommended.

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### Jennifer Fosket says

Good read. Slow at first but I got drawn into the characters and rooted for their lives and chosen families to work out.

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### Michael says

“Six Metres of Pavement” can be taken as a cautionary tale illuminating the reality that one moment of distraction can have a lifetime of consequences. At the same time, it asserts that a second chance will come along if we are aware enough to see it and brave enough to embrace it.

Twenty years ago, Ismail Boxwala fell victim to that one costly moment – forgetting that his infant daughter is in the back seat of his car on a hot summer day. Her death tears apart his marriage and leads him to a shallow existence defined by heavy drink to drown his regrets.

But two women come into Ismail’s life to give him his second chance. Fatima, a young queer activist

rejected by her parents, comes under his somewhat unwilling protection and gives him purpose. Celia, a Portuguese widow who comes to live with her daughter six metres across the street from Ismail, offers him a second chance at love.

As you read "Six Metres of Pavement", you will recognize the oblique reference to the concept of "six degrees of separation". Farzana Doctor allows you to read as little or as much as you like into that parallel.

All in all, an interesting read with compelling characters and a passionate endorsement of the belief that we should not give up hope when our lives come unravelled.

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### **MaryLou Dickinson says**

A really good read - Ismail and Celia gradually getting to know each other, crossing the boundaries of their own losses and tragedies to sharing with each other. Moving on into new mysteries. Set in downtown neighbourhoods of Toronto, the city, as well as the characters, spring to life on the pages of this intriguing and moving novel.

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### **Aban (Aby) says**

I read about this book in the Globe and Mail and the subject matter sounded interesting: an (East) Indian man, living with the consequences of accidentally killing his baby daughter, finally finds himself able to move on with his life by building new relationships. Whilst the story line held my interest, I found the writing to be weak. This is not a book I will be recommending to my friends.

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### **R K says**

Ok so although I love this book, I still cringed when I read 2 50 year old falling in love and "getting it on". I know 50 is the new 30 but if we go by that logic then 20 is the new newborn which is what I was when I read it. :P

However, this book was spectacular. Even the romance.

A man with a past that haunts him, a widow haunted by her dead husband, and a young Muslim girl who is kicked out by her parents because she is queer.

Taking place in my very own Toronto, Ontario, Six meters of Pavement tackles the issue of second chances and moving on. It deals in a very realistic way the actions of others affects a person's mental health and how sometimes, moving on just means letting someone in.

Ismail is an engineer in his 50's who is haunted by the death of his daughter. His daughter whom he accidentally left in the car causing her to die of heat. It was a mistake caused by the toll of parenthood, work, and lack of sleep. Mistakes were made; his costed his daughter's life and it haunts him. Drinking, divorce, distancing from others, one-night stands, loneliness, crippling guilt, panic attacks, depression, and seizures

are battles Ismail deals with on a daily basis. Incredibly lonely yet resolving that this is his punishment Ismail goes through life essentially waiting for nothing. Until he meets his neighbour and a young friend.

Celia is a recently widowed women who also lost her mother in the same time frame. Mourning for 2 people whilst feeling unwanted in her daughter's home, Celia goes through life by staring out the window. One day her eyes catch her neighbour, Ismail and a silent neighbor watch goes on between the two. In the time she spends mourning she comes to realize secrets her husband kept from her and comes to the realization that she has never ever been independent. Moving from dependency on her parents to her husband to her daughter, Celia is frustrated by her easy ability to let people decide things for her.

Fatima, a young 19 year old girl, who is in premed at the university meets Ismail at a creative writing course. Young, politically informed and active, opinionated, happy, and proudly queer Fatima comes as a shock to Ismail because he realizes that she would be the same age as his deceased daughter had she lived. What starts as simple polite conversation (at least on his side) eventually blooms into a friendship. It is through Fatima that Ismail gets the opportunity to be a father again. He learns new things a.k.a gets hip with the times through Fatima and helps try to rebuild the bridge between Fatima and her parents.

These 3 people are mostly haunted by the views of society. Rumors, gossip, grapevine communication, expectations, etc are more malicious then they appear and hurt. It's something that they struggle with, Ismail especially, but step by step they became able to open up and talk to one another. They help each other and support one another. It's through this process that they essentially become a family. Fragmented no doubt but flowers still grow within the cracks of pavement.

Doctor did a fantastic job with this book. Humorous yet crippling. She managed to plunge a knife into right into my heart. Her research and background in mental health really shone through in this novel. Depicting what it's really like to be haunted by your past. Depicting what it's really like to lose someone close to you, even when you realize all the things they did behind your back. Depicting what it's like to grow up in a family that wants the best for you so badly that it ends up suffocating you.

I must read for all.

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### **Faith Reidenbach says**

I had hoped to recommend this novel to my lesbian fiction book group, but I can't. For one thing, it is glacially slow. For another, almost nothing happens that isn't described on the book's back cover. And the Southeast Asian queer activist mentioned on the back cover isn't a well-realized character; we get to know her mainly from what her parents and the main character say or think about her. This book won a Lammy because it's neatly written, not because it has a queer sensibility.

Doctor is a psychotherapist by training, and it shows. She has a fine eye for details and patience for the fact that people's stories loop backward and forward in time. I enjoyed the 2 characters she fleshed out. But a novel needs more than that. More characters and more story.

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### **Pamela says**

[Now I remember... Super book, great ending.

"That October, Fatima brought home a Polaroid camera she found at a yard sale. Wanting to test it out, she made everyone pose for her, in various groupings.

'I've got lots of film, come on you guys!' she instructed. 'Wait, first the two of you,' she said, pointing to Ashton and Sonia. Then she waved in Celia and Ismail.

While Ismail crowded in with the others, he tried to calculate how many photos she'd have to take if she shot every combin

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### **Sil says**

Six Metres of Pavement is a wonderful tale set in Toronto. You will root for the protagonists just like I did, and will hope that they can find what they need from themselves and each other. Farzana Doctor skillfully writes a very tender story of finally getting out of an unimaginable place. A page-turner right to the very end.

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### **Mihaela says**

Poorly written, a lot of cliches used. I read it because I wanted to test the "lending" ebook functions from my local library and this book was available. I do not know why I finished it. I guess I wanted to know "what happens next" and in that alone the book had some merit.

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### **Rainey says**

I quite enjoyed this book.

This came recommended by my favourite book web site BookRiot.com, from an article called - 5 GREAT CANADIAN MUSLIM BOOKS by Casey Stepaniuk.

<http://bookriot.com/2017/02/09/five-g...>

It was so nice to read a book about love after 50. The characters were well developed, and it was nice to learn about different cultures. It was also set in my hometown in an area I am familiar with so that was nice as well.

How the issues of moving on and forgiving oneself from past mistakes, acceptance, forgiveness and unusual friendships were handled deftly.

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## **Sylvia McNicoll says**

Ismail Boxwala is the guy you read about in the paper and wonder how he can live with himself. Fatima is the girl you ponder over, how can she cope with being gay in a religion and culture that forbids it, Celia is a woman you feel sorry for, husband drops dead leaving her in deep debt. Farzana Doctor shows us how these three characters can survive and even move forward in their lives...together. The strong Toronto setting provides a great backdrop for a tender tale of redemption.

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## **Ankur says**

You must read this book.

It was absolutely amazing. I loved all of the characters, and the story is one that is going to stay with me for a long time. So many quotable lines in this one, and bonus, it takes place in Toronto. Of all the "Toronto" books I've ever read, this one felt the most real. The descriptions of various locales was very vivid and evoked many fond memories for me. I saw the younger version of myself in some of the younger characters in this book, ha, which made for quite a few laughs as well. This was definitely one of my favourites, and I'll definitely be putting this one in my to re-read pile.

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## **Cory says**

Have you ever found yourself out in public - on a bus or subway, at a park or in the waiting room of a doctors office - and you're watching strangers and wondering to yourself; what's their story? Well this is their story.

I loved Six Metres of Pavement. Farzana Doctor is an incredibly gentle and funny storyteller with a wonderful eye for small details of life. The story that unfolds (which you're better off not knowing about in advance) is compelling, more than enough to keep you engaged and entertained. But the characters are the heart of the novel.

They become your friends, and as they fumble around trying to figure out how to survive in a world that never seems to make room for their complicated painful histories, you want to know how they do it, you laugh when they bump up against each other and themselves, and you root for them as if rooting for your own future happiness. They are the kind of characters you miss when you finish the novel.

The ways that characters sexual, cultural, and ethnic identities intersect, sometimes clashing and sometimes meshing is often laugh out loud hilarious. Their individual struggles include some unimaginable horrors, but still feel familiar. These may not be things that have happened in your own life, but it's the stuff of life that you know happens, that you've been touched by.

In some ways Six Metres of Pavement is a perfectly Toronto novel. And I should admit that I read it while

away from Toronto, which probably made me love it all the more. But because Toronto is the city it is, the setting, the story, and the characters end up being both from and of countries and times far beyond the shores of Lake Ontario. It's hard to imagine anyone who won't find a friend in this book.

Doctor works a bit of magic of her own in the way these seemingly disparate characters end up in each other's lives, and in imagining a possibility of life where our connections to others - strangers, family, lovers, and the occasional co-dependent hook-up - end up being the thing that makes life worth living.

Read this book.

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### **CaseyTheCanadianLesbrarian says**

I bought and started reading Farzana Doctor's second novel *Six Metres of Pavement* with specific and high expectations: not only has it just been shortlisted for the 2012 Toronto Book award, it was named one of Now Magazine's top ten books of 2011 and won in the category of lesbian fiction at the most recent Lambda Literary awards. *Six Metres of Pavement* also won a 2011 Rainbow award. That's a lot of praise, especially for only a second-time novelist. This kind of positive feedback creates high expectations that can sometimes be hard to live up to. Do I think the novel deserves the praise it's been garnering? Absolutely. It's a very moving novel that is ultimately about the power of chosen families, which is something that's particularly poignant for queers. Do I think this novel was the right choice for a lesbian fiction category, particularly for the Lambda? No...

See the rest of my review at my blog: <http://caseythecanadianlesbrarian.wor...>

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