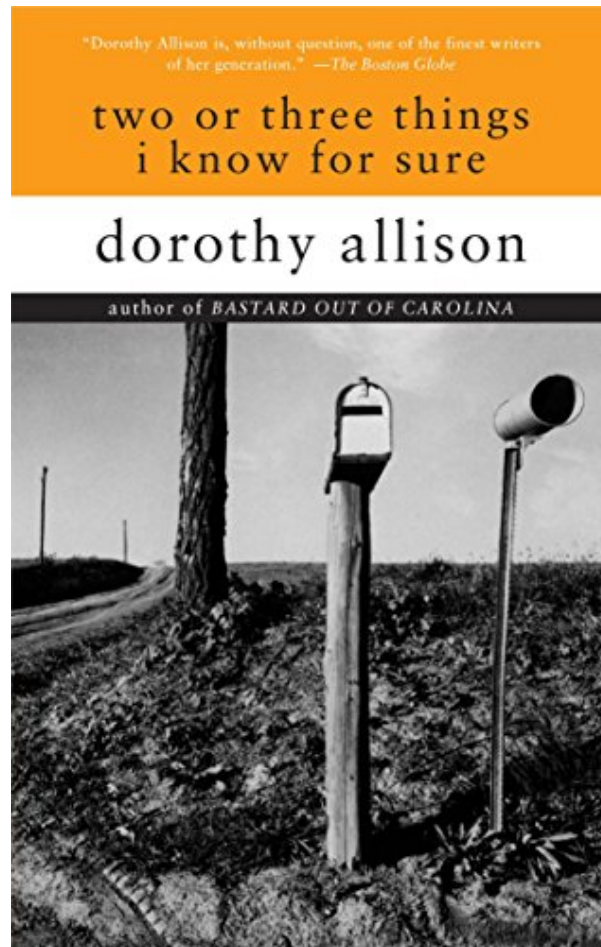


TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW FOR SURE BY DOROTHY ALLISON



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"Dorothy Allison is, without question, one of the finest writers of her generation." —*The Boston Globe*

two or three things
i know for sure

dorothy allison

author of *BASTARD OUT OF CAROLINA*



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From Publishers Weekly

Allison's much-praised novel *Bastard Out of Carolina* was inspired by her childhood in Greenville, S.C., but in this memoir, adapted from a performance piece, she cuts even closer to the bone. "We don't have a family Bible?" the author's fourth-grade self asks her aunt. "Child, some days we don't even have a family," comes the response. If Allison suffered horrors, notably rape by her stepfather when she was five, she has transmuted pain into stories, gaining control with maturity. Indeed, her title prefaces several hard-won aphorisms she uses to counterpoint her memories: "No one is as hard as my uncles had to pretend to be." Her mother was a beauty, as was her sister, but Dorothy, smart and plain, felt a legacy of ugliness, one she shook off slowly as her feminism and her heart led her to lesbian relationships, often painful, finally rewarding. She is now, in her 40s, a new mother, and her stories?and life?are a triumph of love over cruelty. Read it aloud and savor the rhythms. Photos not seen by PW. Author tour.

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Allison (*Bastard Out of Carolina*, LJ 3/1/92) is a poet, essayist, and novelist, but in all these she is a storyteller. For her, stories are not simply creations but the very things that create us. Resounding with a familiarity of the intimate turned universal, this brief memoir recounts the episodes and people of Allison's life who created her and her own re-creation of herself. Often painful and mean, the stories are never bitter or despairing because of Allison's ability to move beyond, if not transform, the meaningless cruelty of life. Written as a performance piece, the cadence of the prose reverberates in the head and begs to be read out loud: "Two or three things I know for sure, and one is that I would rather go naked than wear the coat the world has made for me." With this retelling, Allison remakes that coat in her own image and leaves readers waiting for more stories. Highly recommended. [A BOMC and Quality Paperback selection.]?Eric Bryant, "Library Journal.

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TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW FOR SURE BY DOROTHY ALLISON PDF

Bastard Out of Carolina, nominated for the 1992 National Book Award for fiction, introduced Dorothy Allison as one of the most passionate and gifted writers of her generation. Now, in *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, she takes a probing look at her family's history to give us a lyrical, complex memoir that explores how the gossip of one generation can become legends for the next.

Illustrated with photographs from the author's personal collection, *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure* tells the story of the Gibson women -- sisters, cousins, daughters, and aunts -- and the men who loved them, often abused them, and, nonetheless, shared their destinies. With luminous clarity, Allison explores how desire surprises and what power feels like to a young girl as she confronts abuse.

As always, Dorothy Allison is provocative, confrontational, and brutally honest. *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, steeped in the hard-won wisdom of experience, expresses the strength of her unique vision with beauty and eloquence.

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54 of 59 people found the following review helpful.

This book changed my life.

By wlngtofight

Among the hundreds or thousands of books that I have read, there remain only two that I can say this about. (The other is *The Color Purple*.) *Two or Three Things...* is powerfully written. It is beautiful in the same way that it is to discover that someone's cancer has gone into remission. It is dark, it is almost tragic, and yet it is triumphant; I know of few authors who can pull this off, and none so well as Dorothy Allison.

For anyone who has faced or is facing serious adversity in their lives, be it from poverty, sexual abuse, or anything else, especially for anyone who has gotten through it but not overcome it (you know what your 'it' is): this book will change your life, as well. I have learned a great deal from Dorothy Allison, and I am much the better for it.

Two or three things I know for sure, and one of them is that when I chose life, it was mostly because of this book.

36 of 39 people found the following review helpful.

A VITAL AND INSPIRING PIECE OF ORAL HISTORY

By Larry L. Looney

For those of you who have read Dorothy Allison's amazing, moving novel *BASTARD OUT OF CAROLINA*, this book is the bridge between the fiction of that work and the reality of Dorothy's life -- and even without *BASTARD* as a reference, this is an immensely powerful work.

TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW FOR SURE was originally intended as a one-woman stage presentation -- I can only imagine, after reading this slim volume, how powerful that must have been. Allison's writing talents are incredible -- she conveys the frustration, and especially the pain, of growing up sexually abused in the American South, the ignorance and poverty, the feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, in a very real way. It would be difficult to read this book and NOT get angry at what she endured, at the way women in general were treated. The inspiring thing is that she determined to rise above it

in the only way she knew how -- by literally re-inventing her own life. Comparing the process of doing this to the telling of a story, she makes it understandable even to those who are not familiar with the courage required by abuse victims to make the transition to being survivors.

Incest and abuse tear families apart and can destroy lives. There's a very revealing story that she tells about looking through old photographs, first with her mom, then with other female family members. There's a palpable reluctance on their part to name everyone they see in the photos -- it's as if the people there don't exist outside the pictures, their lives being so damaged that they have literally disappeared. The subconscious protects us -- we remember what we can handle, when we can handle it.

On p.3, Dorothy makes a statement about 'retelling' her life as a story, re-inventing it in order to hold the pain and cast it off. She says: 'Two or three things I know for sure, and one of them is what it means to have no loved version of your life but the one you made.' The abuse victim can't depend on anyone else to reshape and rebuild what has been broken -- those on the outside can help and support, but only the object of the abuse has the power to decide to choose life as a survivor instead of a victim.

Sexual abuse and incest are extremely uncomfortable topics -- but they occur with greater frequency in our society than most people can or will admit -- and ignoring these painful issues will NOT make them go away. Only by speaking out can courageous survivors like Dorothy Allison give hope and encouragement to those who have yet to take that first important step on the road to healing.

This is an honest and well-written book -- and a moving and important one.

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

Dorothy Allison sure knows how to write!

By A Customer

The writing in Dorothy Allison's TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW FOR SURE has such a razor edge you'll want to protect your fingers as you hold the book. With unwavering honesty -- and with a sometimes surprising attitude toward the terrible events that have shaped her life -- Allison deftly avoids the two traps so common to pieces of this kind. There is no whining in this book, and there's no smug tone of "but just look at me now" either. Allison comes from a long line of women who have lived difficult, often unhappy lives, but she never condescends to apologize for any of these women. Rather, she understands -- and brings to life for the reader -- the deeply-buried strength and courage that so often these days is interpreted as weakness or lack of imagination. Allison's story is fascinating, peopled by characters who ring as true as our own families (sometimes to devasatatingly personal effect). But it is Allison's harshly poetic prose, even above the subject matter, that makes this book soar. The writing is simple, never showy, and so focused that it seems at times a magnifying glass held at just the proper angle to catch the rays of a white-hot desert sun. The words burn into us, cleansing and scarring at the same time, and when we turn the final page we know that we've just experienced something increasingly rare these days: the truth

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