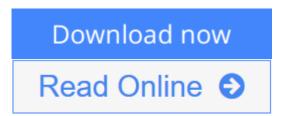


# So Much for That: A Novel

By Lionel Shriver



So Much for That: A Novel By Lionel Shriver

Shep Knacker has long saved for "The Afterlife": an idyllic retreat to the Third World where his nest egg can last forever. Traffic jams on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway will be replaced with "talking, thinking, seeing, and being"—and enough sleep. When he sells his business for a cool million dollars, his dream finally seems within reach. Yet his wife Glynis has concocted endless excuses why it's never the right time to go. Weary of working as a peon for the jerk who bought his company, Shep announces he's leaving for a Tanzanian island, with or without her.

Just returned from a doctor's appointment, Glynis has some news of her own: Shep can't go anywhere because she desperately needs his health insurance. But their policy only partially covers the staggering bills for her treatments, and Shep's nest egg for The Afterlife soon cracks under the strain.

So Much for That follows the profound transformation of a marriage, and Shriver delivers a compelling novel that presses the question: how much is one life worth?



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## So Much for That: A Novel By Lionel Shriver Bibliography

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#### **Editorial Review**

#### From Publishers Weekly

A risk taker with a protean imagination, Shriver (*The Post-Birthday World*) has produced another dazzling, provocative novel, a witty and timely exploration of the failure of our health-care system. Shep Knacker's long-cherished plan to use the million dollars from the sale of his handyman business to retire to a tropical island receives a gut-wrenching blow when his wife, Glynis, is diagnosed with a rare cancer. Transformed into a full-time caregiver, the good-natured Shep is buoyed during the illness of self-centered, vindictive, and obnoxiously demanding Glynis by his working mate and best friend, Jackson Burdina, whose teenage daughter, Flicka, also has a terminal disease. Ironically, Glynis tenaciously clings to life, while Flicka, with whom she bonds, wants to end hers. Jackson, meanwhile, acutely conscious that he's going broke, rails pungently against government regulations and the insurance industry. A mouthpiece for the plight of middle-class workers, Jackson's diatribes about contemporary society—the medical, educational and banking systems, exorbitant taxation, political chicanery—ring painfully true. As Shep's Merrill-Lynch account dwindles and further medical calamities arise, Shriver twists the plot to raise suspense until the heart-lifting denouement. (*Mar.*)

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## From Bookmarks Magazine

Some critics were initially turned off at the thought of reading Shriver's latest offering because, really, how interesting can a novel about health care be? Rather than being pedantic or depressing, however, So Much for That is a thoughtful and powerful look at the effect our health policies have on middle-class Americans. It also raises the unsettling question about the worth, both financial and emotional, of a human life. While several critics thought the secondary storyline involving Shep's buddy Jackson was contrived and others felt that Shriver offered too much information on health care, most agreed that Shep and Glynis's story was "visceral and deeply affecting" (New York Times).

## From **Booklist**

In Shriver's latest and exceptionally timely novel, she probes not so delicately into the workings of a marriage, while at the same time exposing the many deficiencies in the American health-care system. Shep Knacker, 48, is finally ready to escape from tax planning and traffic jams to what he for years has called The Afterlife. He and his wife, Glynis, have taken annual "research" trips to exotic locales like Goa, Laos, and Morocco, Shep diligently compiling notebooks bursting with home prices, crime rates, weather, and—for Zach, their teenage son—Internet access. As Shep announces to Glynis that the time has come to start enjoying their leisure time while they still can, she calmly reports she's just been diagnosed with mesothelioma, a rare and extremely virulent cancer. Shep calmly shreds their airplane tickets, and over the next year watches his Merrill Lynch account drop to nothing, The Afterlife nest egg spent on chemo, hospitalizations, and out-of-network specialists. Shriver perceptively dissects every facet of Glynis' illness, from Zach's withdrawal to friends who never visit or call, immersing the reader in how this family deals with terminal disease, and its rippling effects. --Deborah Donovan

#### **Users Review**

## From reader reviews:

#### **Betty Castaneda:**

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#### **Mitchell Boone:**

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#### Kristina Keene:

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