

On Chesil Beach



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著者:Ian McEwan (author)

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Such is Ian McEwan's genius that, despite rambling nature walks and the naming of birds, his subject matter remains hermetically sealed in the hearts of two people.

It is 1962 when Edward and Florence, 23 and 22 respectively, marry and repair to a hotel on the Dorset coast for their honeymoon. They are both virgins, both apprehensive about what's next and in Florence's case, utterly and blindly terrified and repelled by the little she knows. Through a tense dinner in their room, because Florence has decided that the weather is not fine enough to dine on the terrace, they are attended by two local boys acting as waiters. The cameo appearances of the boys and Edward and Florence's parents and siblings serve only to underline the emotional isolation of the two principals. Florence says of herself: "...she lacked some simple mental trick that everyone else had, a mechanism so ordinary that no one ever mentioned it, an immediate sensual connection to people and events, and to her own needs and desires...."

They are on the cusp of a rather ordinary marital undertaking in differing states of

readiness, willingness and ardor. McEwan says: "Where he merely suffered conventional first-night nerves, she experienced a visceral dread, a helpless disgust as palpable as seasickness." Edward, having denied himself even the release of self-pleasuring for a week, in order to be tip-top for Florence, is mentally pawing the ground. His sensitivity keeps him from being obvious, but he is getting anxious. Florence, on the other hand, knows that she is not capable of the kind of arousal that will make any of this easy. She has held Edward off for a year, and now the reckoning is upon her.

McEwan is the master of the defining moment, that place and time when, once it has taken place, nothing will ever be the same after it. It does not go well and Florence flees the room. "As she understood it, there were no words to name what had happened, there existed no shared language in which two sane adults could describe such events to each other." Edward eventually follows her and they have a poignant and painful conversation where accusations are made, ugly things are said and roads are taken from which, in the case of these two, the way back cannot be found. Late in Edward's life he realizes: "Love and patience--if only he had them both at once--would surely have seen them both through." This beautifully told sad story could have been conceived and written only by Ian McEwan. --Valerie Ryan --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. It should not come as a surprise that Florence and Edward, newlyweds who cannot discuss their previous sexual experiences (or lack thereof), do not communicate out loud with one another until all their emotions boil over at the conclusion of the first night of their honeymoon. That their lives are constructed as narratives and memories makes this novella a particularly good choice for McEwan to perform his own work. McEwan provides a deft sense of cadence, timing and emphasis. McEwan reads this poignant, sad and occasionally amusing gem with entrancing skill, precision and perfect pace. In short, McEwan's performance is mesmerizing. An excellent addition to the recording is a thoughtful interview with the author. The conversation provides insight into McEwan's choice of setting, time period (1962) and characters. McEwan reveals that he tries out his works in progress on audiences, a technique that pays off beautifully. This author-read work is outstanding.

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