



Something Special: A Story

Iris Murdoch

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Beautifully Produced and hauntingly illustrated, this unknown work by Iris Murdoch (1918-1999) is something very special indeed. Previously unpublished but for an excerpt in a 1950s anthology, this is a bittersweet, haunting story. Yvonne, an ordinary, bold young Irish woman, believes that there's more to life than marriage to Sam, the dutiful Jewish lad who is courting her. Set in Dublin, against the vividly recognizable backdrop of the author's native city in the 1950s, Something Special is written with a wry humor and penetrating insight that evokes the psychological tension of James Joyce's "The Dead". Gorgeously illustrated with line drawings by the renowned American artist Michael McCurdy, Something Special is a perfect gift for all occasions, but especially for anyone in love.

Something Special: A Story Details

Date : Published November 1st 2000 by W. W. Norton & Company (first published 1957)

ISBN : 9780393050073

Author : Iris Murdoch

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Genre : Fiction, Short Stories, European Literature, British Literature, Cultural, Ireland, Literature, 20th Century, Classics

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From Reader Review Something Special: A Story for online ebook

Eric Bruen says

My mind comes back to this tiny book, this short story, again and again. I forget the names but not the smells, textures and angst. Crisp paper cards in the shop with the feeling of anticipation and doubt, sour acrid beer and cigarette stench of a pub, heavy, earthy odor of geraniums and the soil they were ripped out of, all leading to the rich damp mossy bark of the beautiful fallen tree. (Obviously I lack the eloquence of Ms Murdoch and it's been too long to pull any quotes from my rum-soaked brain).

My mind goes back to Dublin, where I grew up, again and again. The sensory triggers and memories are different, the time is different. (Iris was my Nana's age.) But there's a bittersweet connection.

Iris gives us a slice of life here, it's not perfect, the beauty isn't always obvious, but it's special. It's certainly complicated. It's life and it's short.

Molly says

Confession: I'm way behind on my reading goal so I go to the library and find the thinnest books and read them, even if it seems it will kill me.

This one took me 35 minutes so maybe that is why I missed all the underlying stuff that the description says is going on...a crotchety old maid (at 24!) is being pushed to marry a creepy, ugly guy and she doesn't seem to be able to stand him. Basically, the book is the story of one of their "dates" and it is weird AF.

TK421 says

3.5, really. A poignant story that questions why is it that we fall in love? While the sobriety of this story is lackluster and not overly entertaining, the undercurrent of what a person desires from courtship is accurately depicted. Sadly, love does not have to be this way but often is. My advice: Look at your significant other and remember what it was that hooked you, that made you feel as if life was insignificant without them, rejoice the fact that only they could fill a void with their presence.

Mary Ahlgren says

Depressing story, perfectly told.

AngryGreyCat says

Very quick novelette or short story. Sad look at an evening in a young woman's life when she realizes it is time to leave dreams or ambitions behind.

Shane says

Can a work less than 60 *small* pages be called a book? "Something Special" makes a good case for just that, and what I loved about this book is how Murdoch uses dialog to create character - I've no clue if this book 'authentically' evokes mid-20 century Dublin, Ireland - but I felt as if I were eavesdropping - so it was all rather convincing.

Satoshi_sh says

I have just started reading her works but I already astonished her talents. The rhythm of sentences is amazing.

"Can't I live my life as I please,"

This is just a short story but it is truly something special.

"The long night was ahead"

Chris says

‘I hate your fucking tree, but I’ll marry you I guess fml ugh’
You could read this or not read it. Kinda doesn’t matter.

Linda says

Huh?!

Rachel Terry says

There's nothing like Irish lit to leave me scratching my head after the last page. Only an Irishman could have written "Waiting for Godot." But that's the beauty of it. It's completely unpredictable and grants you the opportunity to write your own conclusion in your head, based on your experiences, philosophies, and even your current mood. The protagonist Yvonne becomes less and less likable as the story goes on, but at the very end, I recognized the angst that goes along with every big life decision and realized that the Yvonne in

the story is not the birth-to-death Yvonne who grows and changes. She's just the Yvonne of the moment, in a difficult moment. Even if you're not sure you want to read this, it's hardly a risk. It's a short story in hardback--with illustrations!

James MacIntyre says

Pretty terrible really. Disliked the main female character, thought her parents and would-be husband were annoying too. Nothing happens and even if it had, I probably wouldn't have cared

Kat Skarbek says

I have never read any Iris Murdoch before and I suspect that this may not be her best work. I did like her writing, her crisp character observations and her ability to suggest so much without saying a whole lot. Having said this, I didn't really get this story. It was sad and sort of depressing. Which is maybe the emotion it was meant to evoke in the reader - aligning us with the sad people in the story. I may well have missed deeper more nuanced points, but there you have it.

Vipassana says

A portrait of what it was like to be a young and curious women whose life is limited by poverty and being too old to be single. The first third was so bad that I might have given this two stars but it got better and the illustrations have a spooky beauty to them.

Karen says

This was a short story that Iris Murdoch didn't write. The story was put together from her notes after her death, so it probably wasn't in a final form she would have written. Does this matter? Maybe

The writing is a bit clunky, and the characters are one-dimensional. Had Murdoch developed this story, these two issues might have been overcome. As it stands, the story is a sad one of a young woman who hasn't many prospects in life.

John Cairns says

Mine isn't hardcover but paperback. It's set in Dublin and the dialogue seemed that bit more natural than usual. "There's nobody is as poor as we are," said Yvonne. "A diamond ring would be a change at least." "We are as grass which today flourisheth and tomorrow is cast into the oven." "Doesn't every Irish person with a soul in them want to go to England?" she said, and Iris did. "Oh stop whinging!" except 'whinging' is spelt with that obtrusive e when there's no verb it could be confused with unlike 'singeing'. I was a bit flummoxed by the resolution.

