



The Post-Birthday World: A Novel (P.S.)

By Lionel Shriver

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American children's book illustrator Irina McGovern enjoys a secure, settled life in London with her smart, loyal, disciplined partner, Lawrence—until the night she finds herself inexplicably drawn to kissing another man, a passionate, extravagant, top-ranked snooker player. Two competing alternate futures hinge on this single kiss, as Irina's decision—to surrender to temptation or to preserve her seemingly safe partnership with Lawrence—will have momentous consequences for her career, her friendships and familial relationships, and the texture of her daily life.

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The Post-Birthday World: A Novel (P.S.) By Lionel Shriver Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The smallest details of staid coupledness duel it out with a lusty alternate reality that begins when a woman passes up an opportunity to cheat on her longtime boyfriend in Shriver's latest (after the Orange Prize-winning *We Need to Talk About Kevin*). Irina McGovern, a children's book illustrator in London, lives in comfortable familiarity with husband-in-everything-but-marriage-certificate Lawrence Trainer, and every summer the two have dinner with their friend, the professional snooker player Ramsey Acton, to celebrate Ramsey's birthday. One year, following Ramsey's divorce and while terrorism specialist "think tank wonk" Lawrence is in Sarajevo on business, Irina and Ramsey have dinner, and after cocktails and a spot of hash, Irina is tempted to kiss Ramsey. From this near-smooch, Shriver leads readers on a two-pronged narrative: one consisting of what Irina imagines would have happened if she had given in to temptation, the other showing Irina staying with Lawrence while fantasizing about Ramsey. With Jamesian patience, Shriver explores snooker tournaments and terrorism conferences, passionate lovemaking and passionless sex, and teases out her themes of ambition, self-recrimination and longing. The result is an impressive if exhausting novel. (Mar.)

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Critics had divided reactions to Lionel Shriver's latest novel (after the Orange Prize-winning *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, ***1/2 Sept/Oct 2003). Though most considered her use of the dual narrative a clever literary device, not all agreed that it worked. Some found the alternating storylines confusing, while others were bored by the exhaustively catalogued details of Irina's everyday life. *The Post-Birthday World* doesn't provide easy answers to the questions it raises about relationships. Irina, however, proves to be a well-rounded, sympathetic character, and the relative failure or success of her dueling destinies depends as much on the reader's point of view as it does on her own. At 528 pages, Shriver's novel is a hefty examination of the possibilities—and regrets—in the decisions we make every day.

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From [Booklist](#)

Shriver's eighth novel will attract patient readers ready for the next step after chick lit. With dual parallel narratives, Shriver offers two paths for his protagonist, Irina, to tread: stay with her dull but stable boyfriend or run off with the exciting but volatile public figure she's only known in passing and for whom she suddenly lusts. The story lines split at a cinematic-style moment when Irina feels the urge to kiss this new love interest. In one version of the story, she kisses him, and in another, she resists temptation. Both story lines unfold predictably, but what will hook the reader is watching each run its respective course. In each version of her life, she makes choices with excruciating slowness. Her naivete notwithstanding, something about the narrative arc keeps the reader rooting for her. The addition of subplots--her relationship with her demanding and uncompromising mother, the drama of the world of British championship snooker, the unavoidable nature of international terrorism--contribute depth. This novel is ostensibly formulaic, but the details and the solid writing make it ultimately enjoyable. *Debi Lewis*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Chris Hernandez:

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