



The Innocent: A Novel

By Ian McEwan

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A member of a British-American surveillance team in Cold War Berlin finds himself in too deep in this masterful work from the author of *Atonement*. Twenty-five-year-old Leonard Marnham's intelligence work—tunneling under a Russian communications center to tap the phone lines to Moscow—offers him a welcome opportunity to begin shedding his own unwanted innocence, even if he is only a bit player in a grim international comedy of errors. His relationship with Maria Eckdorf, an enigmatic and beautiful West Berliner, likewise promises to loosen the bonds of his ordinary life. But the promise turns to horror in the course of one terrible evening—a night when Marnham learns just how much of his innocence he's willing to shed.

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The Innocent: A Novel By Ian McEwan Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

McEwan's name will be on everyone's lips with his startling new novel, an impeccably constructed psychological thriller set in Berlin during the Cold War. Basing his story on an actual (but little known) incident, he tells of the secret tunnel under the Soviet sector which the British and Americans built in 1954 to gain access to the Russians' communication system. The protagonist, Leonard Marnham, is a 25-year-old, naive, unsophisticated English post office technician who is astonished and alarmed to find himself involved in a top-secret operation. At the same time that he loses his political innocence, Leonard experiences his sexual initiation in a clandestine affair with a German divorcee five years his senior. As his two secret worlds come together, events develop into a gruesome nightmare, far more macabre than anything McEwan (*The Child in Time*) has previously written, building to a searing, unforgettable scene of surrealist intensity in which Leonard and his lover try to conceal evidence of a murder. Acting to save himself from a prison sentence, Leonard desperately performs an act of espionage whose ironic consequences resonate down the years to a twister of an ending. Though its plot rivals any thriller in narrative tension, this novel is also a character study--of a young man coming of age in bizarre circumstances, and of differences in national character: the gentlemanly Brits, all decorum and civility; the brash, impatient Americans; the cynical Germans. McEwan's neat, tensile prose raises this book to the highest level of the genre. Film rights to Paramount; BOMC and QPB featured alternates.

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Review

"Works as a time bob, waiting to go off... A tour de force of horror and philosophical suspense."

-- The New York Times

"So exhaustively suspenseful...it should be devoured at one sitting." -- Newsweek

"A gripping, absolutely unique story of love and suspense that you won't forget." -- Joseph Wambaugh

"McEwan...a breathtaking master...has written a blueprint for the future of the genre." -- Time

From the Paperback edition.

From the Inside Flap

The setting is Berlin. Into this divided city, wrenched between East and West, between past and present; comes twenty-five-year-old Leonard Marnham, assigned to a British-American surveillance team.

Though only a pawn in an international plot that is never fully revealed to him, Leonard uses his secret work to escape the bonds of his ordinary life -- and to lose his unwanted innocence.

The promise of his new life begins to be fulfilled as Leonard becomes a crucial part of the surveillance team, while simultaneously being initiated into a new world of love and sex by Maria, a beautiful young German woman. It is a promise that turns to horror in the course of one terrible evening -- a night when Leonard Marnham learns just how much of his innocence he's willing to shed.

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From reader reviews:

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Faye Pearson:

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