



Something Special: A Story

By Iris Murdoch

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A heartrending tale of love and repression, recently discovered.

An unforgettable tale of love and repression, appearing in book form for the first time. 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 Previously unpublished but for an excerpt in a 1950s anthology, this is a bittersweet, haunting story.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.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A poor neighborhood of Dublin in the 1950s provides the setting for this stunningly affecting short story by the late Murdoch, appearing in book form for the first time. Yvonne Geary is getting on toward spinsterhood. At age 24, she is dismissive of her stolid suitor, Sam Goldman, who courts her with gentle respect. Yvonne's mother and uncle, with whom she shares shabby lodgings, urge her to marry Sam despite his being "one of the Chosen People." In fact, Sam's "not like the run of Jew-boys at all," claims Mrs. Geary, in one of her unconsciously bigoted remarks about the tribe she calls "those ones." His religion is not what Yvonne objects to in Sam; it's his dogged but mundane devotion. What she desperately wants is romance, and what she gets instead is an uproar in a seedy bar when an inebriated poet takes a fancy to her. In a poignant denouement, Yvonne understands the kind of "poetry" Sam would offer and comes to terms with the realities of her life. Despite its cutting, humorous details, this story is more wistful and gentler than much of Murdoch's work, and it gains power from illustrator Michael McCurdy's rough-hewn woodcuts. Its diminutive size (5"x7") and the fact that no further works will be forthcoming from its respected author are both strong indications for a potential stocking stuffer during the holidays. (Nov.)

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From [Booklist](#)

This handsome little volume is of special interest in light of Murdoch's recent death and the fact that her husband, John Bayley, published two sensitive yet unsettling chronicles of her struggle with Alzheimer's (*Elegy for Iris* [1998] and *Iris and Her Friends* [1999]) that left readers with the image of Murdoch in decline rather than of Murdoch as the highly sophisticated woman of letters she was. So it is a pleasure to hear her crisp and knowing voice in this never-before-published anti-love love story. Murdoch is at her subtle best in this finely nuanced tale of two poor and romantic Dubliners: Yvonne, a sullen creature, and Sam, a Jew with a poetic streak. Standing firmly on its own in spite of its brevity, and accentuated by Michael McCurdy's powerful woodcuts, this lustrous story has a surprisingly rich array of social, sexual, class, and religious conflicts that percolates evocatively and memorably in the reader's mind. *Donna Seaman*
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About the Author

Iris Murdoch was one of the twentieth century's most prominent novelists, winner of the Booker Prize for *The Sea, The Sea*. She died in 1999. **Michael McCurdy**, the celebrated American artist, has illustrated books by David Mamet and Edward Abbey. He lives in Massachusetts.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Joyce Loza:

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