

A Flight to Romance

John Fishwick

CreateSpace (Jan 7, 2014)

Softcover \$24.95 (414pp)

978-1-4929-2109-7

Intellectual dialogue adds depth to this love story with two refreshing characters.

A lonely couple defies the brutal blows of circumstance in this transatlantic journey to self-discovery. After learning to accept the loss of their life partners, an astronomy professor and an English teacher allow fate to intervene once again. This time it is a bright beginning, not a dismal end, that greets weary and reluctant hearts.

The aftermath of grief—a renewal filled with tentative hope—sets the tone for this exploratory romance. Sparked by a chance meeting on a plane bound for England, these intellectual protagonists take the ultimate humiliation risk and choose to stay together for the duration of their trip. Not knowing what buried secrets could emerge along the way, they share their precious quiet time, engaging in provocative discussions and college-style debate.

At certain points in this entertaining excursion, the narrative veers into a lecture hall presentation. Though nothing is inherently wrong in doing so, this rather lengthy novel pads its pages with history, astronomy, and anthropological lessons. Rather than developing naturally, certain conversations feel imposed on the story, overriding character and plot. The glimmering personalities of two extraordinary people struggle to be seen from beneath an issue-oriented, verging-on-academic story line, and the underlying reason for the couple's interactions remains hidden by a textbook delivery. While it would be fascinating in a nonfiction book, the information that comprises nearly half of this polished work becomes frustrating in a fictional context.

That said, lighthearted, travelogue-style description and personal contemplation simultaneously refresh the setting and divert the action into unrelated areas. For example: "His mind wandered back to his house in Gainesville, where he had a casting of a fossil called 'Archaeopteryx,' which was a reptile, but you could see clearly that it also had feathers. This was an indication that reptiles may have changed into birds, just as it was now believed that dinosaurs changed into birds."

A striking blue cover depicting small boats near a shoreline, presumably at low tide, alludes to the symbolic midlife situation examined in this book—waiting for the water to take one off the sand and back into the sea. A lighthouse beckons in the distance, taunting the characters to demonstrate courage. The back cover blurb indicates the all-encompassing nature of the novel—art and science—and the meeting of minds in profound dialogue.

Born on the Isle of Man, John Fishwick studied chemistry and geology in college, and later immigrated to the United States. His background, along with his Mensa affiliation, enhance the details of his UK setting and provide the countless topics addressed in his story. Meticulous research and likely firsthand experience create a realistic backdrop for his star-propelled lovers.

Perfectly suited to an audience looking for a meandering stroll through England without the pressure of anticipating a preconceived outcome, this debut novel offers the ambling pathway.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (February 10, 2014)

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