

Earning It

E. F. Dodd

Sugar Beaver Books (Aug 23, 2022)

Softcover \$14.95 (324pp)

979-898628800-0

A former couple's feelings are tested during a paradise vacation in the lighthearted romance novel Earning It.

Animosity turns to love in E. F. Dodd's romance novel *Earning It*, in which a woman reunites with her ex-boyfriend.

Rae works in public relations. She is skilled at spinning people's misfortunes. In her own life, she's just as good at masking her real feelings.

Rae agrees to be the maid of honor in her friend Kez's wedding to Jackson; though she's happy for them, she fakes indifference to the romantic ambiance. But then Rae learns that Jackson's best man is Van, a brooding past lover whom she felt betrayed by.

Yearning and lust direct the novel, even as Rae leans on her friends' advice to be cautious as she proceeds. Rae and Van's encounters as part of the wedding party lead to reminiscing in a sumptuous Cayman Islands setting; they express hopes about developing their own lasting love. Rae's prickly comments lead to some roadblocks on the weeklong group vacation that Kez planned in lieu of a traditional honeymoon. Still, Van is encouraged to win Rae back.

The story lines of the secondary characters contribute to the tale, which emphasizes the wedding party's genuine friendships, collective successes, and extreme good looks. The result is an alcohol-infused, escapist fantasy in which adults behave like college students, as when they make remarks that are full of innuendo and fixate on their clothing choices. Their flirtations are coy, though they work to exercise restraint and deal with compelling inner reckonings.

The book is propelled by tension regarding Rae and Van's inevitable heart-to-heart. If they are to succeed, they have to learn to see their situation from the other person's perspective. However, this maturation is somewhat impeded by the speed with which Van and Rae yield to their physical impulses. Rae only reveals her real concerns to Van later on. Further, the upbeat resolution is arrived at in a hasty fashion.

Indeed, as a heroine, Rae is too insecure. What confidence she does feel rests in her ability to provoke men's attention. In contrast, Van, who is tasked with proving his sincerity, tries his best to anticipate Rae's needs. The men surrounding him are levelheaded, delivering sage advice. Jackson ends up being the most mature member of the cast, though he's underutilized as the story progresses.

An erstwhile couple faces their second chance with uncertainty in the Caribbean-set romance novel *Earning It*.

KAREN RIGBY (July 28, 2022)

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