

The Edge of the World

Garrett Leigh

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Fast and frothy, Garrett Leigh's *The Edge of the World* is a romance that takes place on the road between concert venues, as a musician on the rise finds unexpected help with chasing his roots.

Shay is the enigmatic frontman of an up-and-coming Irish band, Smuggler's Beat, that turns folk music on its head. His sexy exterior belies his inner fragility, which is tied into family, past heartbreak, and his diabetes: "Being diabetic was like chasing a never-ending beam of light. It was always there, but he rarely caught up with it." Ollie is the Polish journalist who's been hired to video document an inquiry into Shay's bloodline, and whose surly exterior hides abiding pain.

While the men's attraction to each other is immediate, their individual insecurities initially prevent them from voicing their interest. A drunken, passionate kiss after one of Shay's shows changes that. It's a kiss that Shay remembers as magical and ethereal, though it is followed by awkward avoidance, as melancholy Ollie insists to himself, "I need to stop kissing him."

Often, Ollie's means of stopping himself from reaching out to Shay involve putting literal distance between them. Even when Ollie does return from his excursions, revelations and complications make the men's coming together fraught. It is the memory of their passion that makes hurdling all barriers just tempting enough to risk.

There's some melodrama involved as Shay and Ollie work their way toward each other, and sexual metaphors related to burning become more cringe-inducing as Ollie's secrets are revealed. The foundations of the men's relationship never seem wholly secure. Still, under the glitter of the stage lights and in the thrilling present, theirs is a bond that drives interest. *The Edge of the World* is a catchy romance.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (July/August 2019)

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