



The Nothing

Hanif Kureishi

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Hanif Kureishi's *The Nothing* is a darkly humorous and slightly pornographic story about three extremely self-centered individuals entrenched in an odd, triangular affair.

A retired and terminally ill filmmaker, Waldo, has suspicions of an affair between his wife, the vain and impulsive Zee, and his "friend" (in the loosest of terms), the manipulative and damaged Eddie.

Zee, despite being extremely superficial and self-absorbed, has been taking care of her ailing husband for ten years when she falls in love with Eddie. She does very little to hide her relationship, purposely parading her paramour around Waldo as if to punish him.

Eddie has a tumultuous past that explains his pathetic and toxic behavior. It is obvious Eddie has no shame in blatantly taking Waldo's wife, home, clothes, and money right from under Waldo's nose.

Waldo decides to create his final *pièce de résistance*: video and audio proof of his wife's infidelity. Waldo even admits, "I don't want her to be happy. I just want her to be with me. Is that too much to ask?"

Kureishi takes these three self-centered characters and fleshes out their multilayered personalities with strange quirks, traumatizing past experiences, and emotional behavior. Each character's temperament is slightly distasteful, but their peculiarities lead to enjoyable banter and a humorous read. Kureishi's characters are an intriguing mix: lovable and funny, disturbingly impetuous, and sometimes downright repugnant in their behavior.

Brief and highly enjoyable, *The Nothing* shines with its intricate characterization and interesting web of relationships. Kureishi forges an intense desire to discover exactly how each character's life, or ultimately their deaths, will play out, and how each plays a part in the others' fates.

KATIE ASHER (January/February 2018)

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