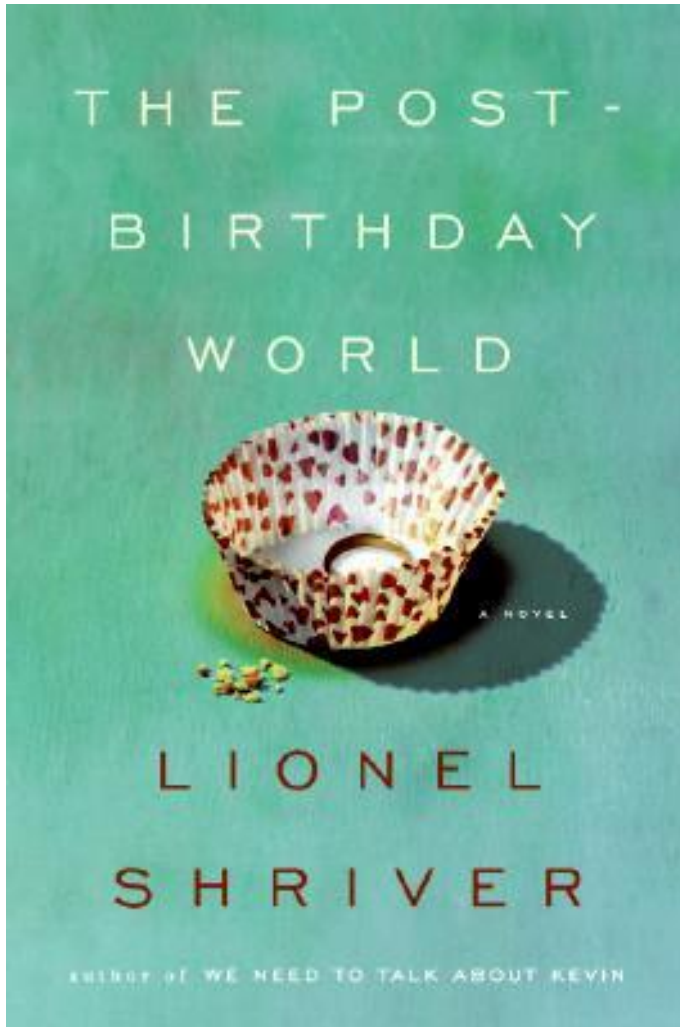

Lionel Shriver

The Post-Birthday World



Title: The Post-Birthday World

Author: Lionel Shriver

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Description

In this eagerly awaited new novel, Lionel Shriver, the Orange Prize-winning author of the international bestseller *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, delivers an imaginative and entertaining look at the implications, large and small, of whom we choose to love. Using a playful parallel-universe structure, *The Post-Birthday World* follows one woman's future as it unfolds under the influence of two drastically different men.

Children's book illustrator Irina McGovern enjoys a quiet and settled life in London with her partner, fellow American expatriate Lawrence Trainer, a smart, loyal, disciplined intellectual at a prestigious think tank. To their small circle of friends, their relationship is rock solid. Until the night Irina unaccountably finds herself dying to kiss another man: their old friend from South London, the stylish, extravagant, passionate top-ranking snooker player Ramsey Acton. The decision to give in to temptation will have consequences for her career, her relationships with family and friends, and perhaps most importantly the texture of her daily life.

Hinging on a single kiss, this enchanting work of fiction depicts Irina's alternating futures with two men temperamentally worlds apart yet equally honorable. With which true love Irina is better off is neither obvious nor easy to determine, but Shriver's exploration of the two destinies is memorable and gripping. Poignant and deeply honest, written with the subtlety and wit that are the hallmarks of Shriver's work, *The Post-Birthday World* appeals to the what-if in us all.

Insightful reviews

Angeld01: As someone who owns "Sliding Doors" and has made a habit of watching it nearly once a year...I love the concept of small changes making a big difference in your life.

But I do not like this book. Some books start slow. Stephen King, my favorite writer of all time, has been known to start slow (at least by me). But this book - stays slow.

Irina is living a content (boring) life with Lawrence. A man whom refuses to marry her, withholds emotion and affection - but whom she is never-the-less proud to be with.

On weekend, while Lawrence is out of town, Irina kisses (or doesn't) Ramsey...a friend she has barely seen and tolerated for years.

In both scenarios - she immediately falls in love with selfish, demanding Ramsey.

I had a very difficult time getting into the book. But as soon as her parallel realities started taking place, I was back on board, until I realized - I DON'T LIKE ANY OF THESE CHARACTERS.

Irina has zero backbone or self respect. Lawrence doesn't deserve a girlfriend - in either reality & when it comes to Ramsey, I like the often talked about but hardly seen Jude just for leaving him!

I rarely, almost never, do this. But I am somewhere in the 200's of this book, and I could care less how it ends. So, I am putting it down.

If I could give less than 1 star - I probably would.

Incidentally, if you want to read a book along these lines that's an actually entertaining read: *Me vs. Me* by Sarah Mlynowski.

Sonya: The novelist is talented, but squanders her gift. *The Post-Birthday World* is maddening for many reasons, the first being that the conceit of the novel is strong enough to have made me want to see how Shriver could pull it off so I was compelled to finish and the payoff was not there; the second, that the narrator appears to be Shriver herself, including her condescension toward anyone outside a particular realm--is it impolite to call narrator/Shriver *insufferable?*; and the third, that the novel's back and forth narratives were so obviously parallels, where a much more interesting approach would have been to have the situations veer from each other completely, realizing all the while that the main character's core personality and life-approach would probably be the same either way. This was like an extended creative writing project, replete with convoluted dialogue. I've read lots of Shriver criticism that extolls her finger-on-the-pulse sensibility, but I don't see it.

Victoria Fullard: This is one of those rare books that may be objectively good but that I still didn't like all that much. In *Sliding Doors* fashion, Irina McGovern's life takes two distinct paths: in one, she submits to temptation and kisses her sexy snooker playing friend Ramsey, resulting in the end of her relationship with the steadfast Lawrence; in the other, she resists temptation and stays put.

The concept is fun and suggests a lot about what stock the author places in soul mates and fate. We all have moments that feel like potential turning points, decisions that could have changed our lives. I was admitted into a program to teach English in Japan right after college, but I moved to New York City instead. What would my life have been if I'd made one single decision differently? It's this kind of speculation that gives *The Post-Birthday World* the potential to be so much fun.

Unfortunately, though, Lionel Shriver didn't quite deliver. While Irina's life takes two distinct paths, they are completely grounded in her relationships; Irina feels that having a man to take care of her is the ultimate goal. She feels bad about it, but she feels it nonetheless. As if to show that the man chosen is the center of the universe around which all other things orbit, Shriver takes pains to make the rest of Irina's life constant: at the same juncture in each life, Irina turns from illustrating other authors' books to writing her own and meets with great success (in one life it's critical, in the other it's commercial). A Christmas visit to her mother brings out the best and worst of her partner in both lives. Shriver seems to want to say simultaneously that one decision can change everything and that none of our decisions affect anything.

It also didn't help that I immediately liked one of Irina's lives — or at least her better halves — better than the other, quickly giving my reading a lopsided quality. That said, Shriver created

both Lawrence and Ramsey with a heavy hand. Instead of making them both decent men with quirks and flaws, they're basically both assholes. So, naturally, Shriver focuses a lot of energy on what Irina doesn't like about each life. Sure, she throws us a positive bone here and there, but for the most part we hear that Irina and Ramsey fight too much or that Lawrence smothers her and reprimands her for dressing too sexy or daring to have a second glass of wine. It's hard to spend 500 pages with a protagonist who has two lives and grumbles about them both but never straightens her spine enough to build a better, third option. I wanted Irina to end up single in both versions, which tells you a little something about the options Shriver has given her. Also: the endless time spent on the sex in each relationship — it is the backbone of her life with Ramsey, whereas with Lawrence it's frequent and attentive but routine to the extreme — became routine to the extreme to this reader.

After the spectacular *We Need To Talk About Kevin* (my nominee for best novel with an after-school special for a title), I'll happily give Shriver another shot. Sadly, this one didn't live up, though.

Kelly: Ostensibly the vintage chick-lit, romcom, virtuous Victorian kind tale of the younger girl who needs to make a choice from prudence, protection and morality vs. ardour and a "consuming love," the tale does even more than that, and delves a lot deeper than the common tale of the sort may do. It truly is tempting to match this to *Sliding Doors*, because the suggestion is the same. I.e.: one selection later, what occurs in exchange universes. One she chooses to stick with her safe, strong significant other Lawrence, the opposite she chooses to throw warning to the wind and feature a stoned, inebriated kiss with a well-known British snooker participant (BTW: I freely admit I had no concept what snooker was. I am American.) yet this can be performed in a way more literary way. It's a chick lit topic with severe Novel writing. I am extra apt to match it to an estrogen packed model of Ian McEwan's sort of writing than *Sliding Doors*. A unmarried event/moral hindrance that adjustments the lifetime of the protagonist, best them into outcomes they by no means may have dreamed attainable for therefore small a thing. There have been such a lot of strains in there that simply rang so precise to me. I undertook my quite often hated perform of underlining issues in a book, simply because I could not endure that I did not keep in mind them later on. That is, until eventually I bought too stuck up within the tale to care. Yet I'll positioned down a couple of that I did underline right here simply to offer you an idea of the writing: In the model of the tale the place she chooses to cheat, the evening after: "She really didn't comprehend why, while she had this sort of robust motivation to not rock the boat, she may maintain being so provocative, or on a night while she was once determined to not allure shut examination, she will be have in an erratic, irritable style guaranteed to convey greatest scrutiny. Did she wish him to know? possibly she used to be forcing him to play a parlor game, like Botticelli: I am a well-known person, and my identify starts off with a scarlet A. or perhaps Lawrence was once purported to play hangman at the again of a program, and because he may by no means in 1000000 years wager that she'd selected F-A-I-T-H-L-E-S-S H-U-S-S-Y, continue to noose himself, letter via letter." "This is what the coward in Lawrence had opted for: that they by no means kiss. That they by no means examine each one other. That he see in basic terms the blurred profile of her head; that she constantly stare on the wall. That she by no means be accredited to fulfill these imploring brown eyes and watch them get what they begged for... He enjoyed her lots that it used to be scary, and he might not more inspect her eyes whereas they have been fucking than stare into the face of the sun." Just an

instance or I came upon randomly. Shriver is bound to show that either endings have their problems, and that there's no black and white. I believe it depends upon the character of the reader which lifestyles they part with, even though the top of the ebook makes it beautiful transparent which means she feels. Up until eventually that point, either futures will be both depressing or both happy, reckoning on your viewpoint in life. I like that the finishing is simply that, a selected ending. The tale is going on in either ways, and you may opt for which to believe, draw your personal morals. It used to be really engrossing for somebody like me who moment guesses approximately all her judgements and regularly wonders 'what may need been'. Problems with the book: Shriver turns out to get sidetracked with a couple of digressions on topics that she's it appears drawn to yet which do not appear to slot in with this book. She has characters provide peculiar rants that appear out of character, and her phrases are only a bit too fierce. She is principally sanctimonious at the factor of American citizens in London or out of the country in general. Shriver additionally sincerely has a major socioeconomic, national, and in addition British guilt complex. There is a lot in the following approximately what one "should," do, and large reasons of the day (the ebook occurs among 1997-2003, largely) are pointed out all around the place. It really is partly to make a point, so I'm going to forgive her that, yet nonetheless, she seems attempting to discover her personal in charge emotions and impulses at the web page in locations that do not quite fit. There is a number of rants concerning the romance of being poor, for instance, the possessive grief after 11th of September (which used to be really relatively insightful- who "owned" 9-11 after it), stuff approximately virtuously staring at the inside track each evening and being concerned concerning the 3rd World. Yes, a part of one of many characters... yet a section an excessive amount of for it to were simply that. Also, I must admit the standard of the writing was once a little uneven. I might say nearly all of it was once good, yet there have been numerous spots the place she left in the back of completely nuanced, attractive explorations for unsubtle metaphors and heavy handed, clunky expressions. Overall, it nonetheless labored for me though. I cherished it really a bit.

Stephanie: This was once a girly ebook for sure, yet I discovered it enormously depressing. This ebook is going in parallel tales and starts off and ends with an identical bankruptcy that suffices for either stories. Basically, there are bankruptcy 2s, 3s, 4s etc. The chapters that experience a black quantity are those the place she is rebellious and defiant and the white ones are those the place she is behaving herself. To boil this publication all the way down to quite a few sentences, the most personality has a boyfriend she's been with for years. This couple used to have fun birthdays with one other couple, yet this couple has damaged up and via an odd twist of events, our heroine and the newly unmarried snooker player, Ramsey rejoice alone. This can be the place the booklet breaks off into parts. Needless to assert within the black chapters our heroine is being a dishonest whore, and is for that reason unhappy. Within the mild chapters this brush with lust gave her new chanced on love for her boyfriend, who's a jerk, so she is devoted to him and she or he is unhappy. This is often a kind of books that tells you that being in love will purely make you sad and you'll both screw a person you care approximately deeply over or they will screw you (and now not within the sturdy way). I beloved the reflected occasions during this book. It was once very fascinating to determine what may occur to her with this choice. Whenever an occasion quite me, I could not wait to get to it within the subsequent bankruptcy to work out the way it had changed. The simple factor that made me groan used to be how Irina wrote a e-book a great deal like this one and defined what it meant. I already understood what she used to be attempting to say. After which she gained a prize for her book? Provide me a

break. a bit James Frey type of pump your self up on your personal publication action. Good booklet and fascinating the way it unfolds. yet through the tip you are prepared for it to be over, and also you also are able to get your individual condominium and circulate fifty cats in and remain unmarried for the remainder of your life.

Katie: nice conceptualization (I continuously loved these "Choose your individual Adventure" books), yet awful execution (not to say intimation, narration, accentuation and punctuation). This writer understands no longer the idea that of "too a lot information." possibly i'm at the prudish side, yet will we need to be so intimate with a personality as to grasp all their physically behavior and functions? Cervix ? sexy. but if I wasn't curling my lip in disgust, i used to be banging my head opposed to the wall in frustration and boredom. If no longer for Jenny's confident review, i wouldn't have made it via 517 pages inside of major personality Irina's inane brain. Her unbelievably long, overly descriptive sentences, growing unbelievably lengthy chapters, with recommendations and issues lined two times to create her parallel-universe... basically to inform us issues any reader may possibly choose up from the sub-text. That violates my cardinal rule of enjoyment analyzing (and track listening): do not bore us, get to the chorus. To sum up the solid of characters: Irina - self-destructive lo-ser. Her boyfriend Lawrence - controlling A-hole. substitute lover Ramsey - scorching yet 1-note. yet do not even get me began at the italics! Bloody hell! ON each PAGE. do not you think that they now not supply emphasis should you use them ON each PAGE? And lastly, I want I had counted what percentage occasions she used ludicrously pretentious phrases like "folderol," "postprandial," "mention as opposed to use." If that is how all American ex-pats in London talk, God keep the Queen!

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