

Love madness proves a killer in Rendell's *Bridesmaid*

BY EMMA THOM

The Bridesmaid
by Ruth Rendell
Doubleday
272 pages
\$22.95

If you were madly in love with someone, what length would you go to to prove it? Would you forsake all others? Cross the earth to be with your lover? Or do something that you would otherwise never do, something against all your values and better judgement — something like murder?

Ruth Rendell's latest thriller, *The Bridesmaid*, explores the consequences of the initial "madness" of love. Philip Wardman comes from a more or less conventional family and lives in a suburb of London. His life is disrupted by the intrusion of an anything but ordinary bridesmaid at his sister's wedding.

As the physical incarnation of his ideal woman (previously realized only by a Roman statue that sits in his mother's garden), Philip immediately falls in love with the bridesmaid, Senta Pelham. She declares "I saw you across the room and I knew you were the twin to my soul, the other half."

Senta, with long silver hair and a delicate pale body, is "like a goddess of mystery and the arcane." Philip is irrevocably lost to her; her will put up with her



Ruth Rendell: a master of the standard mystery format

dingy apartment, quirky habits and sudden, violent temper just to be with her. But her love is not without a catch: "Some say that to live fully you have to have done

four things...Plant a tree, write a poem, make love with your own sex, and kill someone...I shall prove I love you by killing someone for you, and you must

kill someone for me." It is only after this request that Philip begins to doubt his lover's mental stability.

To make matters worse (if that is possible), Philip has an inexplicable phobia against violence and death to the degree that he cannot even bring himself to watch the evening news on television. The events which then unfold, pitted against Senta's preoccupation with death and reincarnation and Philip's fear of such things, lead the reader deeper into the disturbed mind of *The Bridesmaid*. What further unsettles Philip is his ability to sift fact from fiction. He has reason to doubt certain things that Senta has told him about her past and cannot believe her when she says "I went to prove my love for you, Philip...I killed someone."

In typical Rendell style, the emphasis is not on the particular (and peculiar) actions of this couple but rather on the psychology surrounding the affair. Rendell is known as a mystery writer, but this book would best be termed a psycho-thriller. Over her twenty-five year career, she has proven herself to be a master of the standard mystery format (writing from the perspective of the detective). But many of her stories, like *The Bridesmaid*, are told from the point of view of someone close to the criminal or the criminal himself.

Rendell seems fascinated with

exploring the criminal's motives and state of mind when on the run. Oddly enough, this method of storytelling is remarkably parallel to the traditional mystery tale: rather than seeing the clues build up and the mystery unravel, one sees the actions build up and the mind of the central character unravel. This creates a unique sense of mystery and suspense.

Rendell is a very subtle writer. For much of this study of mutual obsession we see into Senta's mind through Philip's eyes. However, as the story unfolds one becomes less interested in the actions of Senta than in Philip's reactions, his phobia of violence and fanaticism for propriety. Indeed, Rendell seems more intent on seeing what happens when a normal, somewhat dull man flirts with an exotic, alluring and uncontrollable imagination, and finds himself drawn into a world he can no longer comprehend.

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Monday, October 16, 1989



Student Exchange

An exchange program with the United States offers all the unique opportunities and challenges that come with living in a foreign country. It is a great opportunity to get to know your american cousins and to experience first hand the unique adventure that only an exchange like this can offer.

Exchange Method and Limitation:

Exchange for the full academic year or can be for one semester only. Exchange must be during sophomore or junior year. Student must live in university residence or campus housing (depends on agreement with the university).

Eligibility Requirements

- must be going into your sophomore or junior year at UPEI

- must be in good academic standing (65 average or greater)
- must be keen on having a fantastic year!!!

Costs of Exchange

Student pays UPEI fees for the following:

- room and board (includes maximum meal plan)
- tuition and student union fees

other costs:

- international/local transportation
- books and supplies
- spending money
- etc.

ISEP Fees

- medical plan (200 dollars) must apply for
- nomination fee (30 dollars) sent in with exchange application
- placement fee (165 dollars) sent when placed at university

Reasons To Take Part In An Exchange

- change of a life-time!
- study "away" at university but only pay UPEI fees
- have a fantastic time!
- learn about another country and culture
- study at another university
- have loads of fun!
- travel!!
- and have some more fun!!

Interested? Drop into Student Services and take to me! I'm in the office on

Monday, 11:00-2:30

Wednesday, 11:00-2:00 and

Friday, 12:00-3:30

Later,

Jo-Anna Murphy

Student Exchange Advisor.

Would all Common Wealth Students please drop into Student Services to see Jo-Anna Murphy or to room 317 to see Dave Morrison. Thanks!



EXPERIENCE A

“ STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM ”