



The Rain Before It Falls (Vintage Contemporaries)

By Jonathan Coe

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As a young girl, Rosamond is sent to Shropshire to escape the Blitz. Here, in the countryside, she forms a close bond with her older cousin, Beatrix, a young woman haunted by anger and resentment.

Sixty years later, just before her death, Rosamond records her memories on cassettes, addressing them to a distant cousin—a near stranger—named Imogen. As Gill, her beloved niece, listens to these tapes, a heart—stopping family saga is revealed. In this masterful portrait of three generations of woman, Jonathan Coe exposes the profound reserves of hope and loss within the lives of ordinary woman.

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The Rain Before It Falls (Vintage Contemporaries) By Jonathan Coe Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. In the latest from acclaimed London novelist Coe (*The Rotter's Club*), the story of two cousins' friendship is keyed to a hatred that is handed down from mother to daughter across generations, as in a Greek tragedy. Evacuated from London to her aunt and uncle's Shropshire farm, Rosamond bonds with her older cousin, Beatrix, who is emotionally abused by her mother. Beatrix grows up to abuse her daughter, Thea (in one unforgettable scene, Beatrix takes a knife and flies after Thea after Thea has ruined a blouse), with repercussions that reach the next generation. All of this is narrated in retrospect by an elderly Rosamond into a tape recorder: she is recording the family's history for Imogene, Beatrix's granddaughter, who is blind, and whom Rosamond hasn't seen in 20 years. As the story progresses, it becomes clear that Rosamond's fundamental flaw and limit is her decency, a quality Coe weaves beautifully into the Shropshire and London settings—along with violence. Through relatively narrow lives on a narrow isle, Coe articulates a fierce, emotional current whose sweep catches the reader and doesn't let go until the very end. (Mar.)

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From [The New Yorker](#)

Time seems to collapse in this troubling family saga, more notable for its meditative aspects than for its relatively straightforward story of betrayal and loss. From her deathbed, the elderly Rosamond tells the story of her life and relationships through a series of photographs dating from nineteen-thirties rural England to London in the nineteen-eighties. The conceit allows Coe to explore the occult-seeming process by which the mind can summon the past into the present, but it occasionally becomes tiresome, given the plethora of symbolism-laden objects and locations that the reader must decode as different moments collide. By the end, however, a complex intergenerational mosaic of mothers and daughters emerges, suggestively demonstrating that, in the making of memory, "nothing was random, after all."

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Review

"A triumph . . . from its amazing narrative voice to its satisfying and moving conclusion." —*San Francisco Chronicle* "Coe painstakingly builds a psychological mystery evoking the suspense and dread of books such as Ian McEwan's *Atonement* . . . Emotionally overwhelming." —*People* "Quiet, elegiac, never straying into sentiment, [*The Rain Before It Falls*] is perhaps the most spare yet poetic of Coe's novels." —*The Boston Globe* "A gripping family drama worthy of Alice Munro." —*Time Out New York* "**A profoundly moving meditation on misfired relationships, Coe's elegaic seventh novel plumbs the depths of withheld love and emotional austerity among three generations of emotionally dysfunctional women.**" —**James Urquhart, *Financial Times*** "Concentrated and controlled [with] a depth of human understanding...for the admiring reader, the question may be whether *The Rain Before It Falls* is a diversion for Jonathan Coe, or whether it quietly announces a new direction." —Frances Taliaferro, *The Washington Post Book World* "A novel told in a simple, decent voice is as welcome as it is rare . . . Absorbing, graceful and melancholy." —Karen R. Long, *Cleveland Plain-Dealer* "Dignified and sure . . . Skillfully layered and plotted." —*The Atlantic Monthly* "A complex intergenerational mosaic of mothers and daughters." —*The New Yorker* "Precise and considered, restrained but unblinking . . . [Coe's] tensest and most affecting work." —Matthew Peters, *The Boston Globe* "Jonathan Coe's small masterpiece." —Regina Marler, *New York Observer* "Coe articulates a fierce, emotional current whose sweep catches the reader and doesn't let go until the very end." —*Publishers Weekly*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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