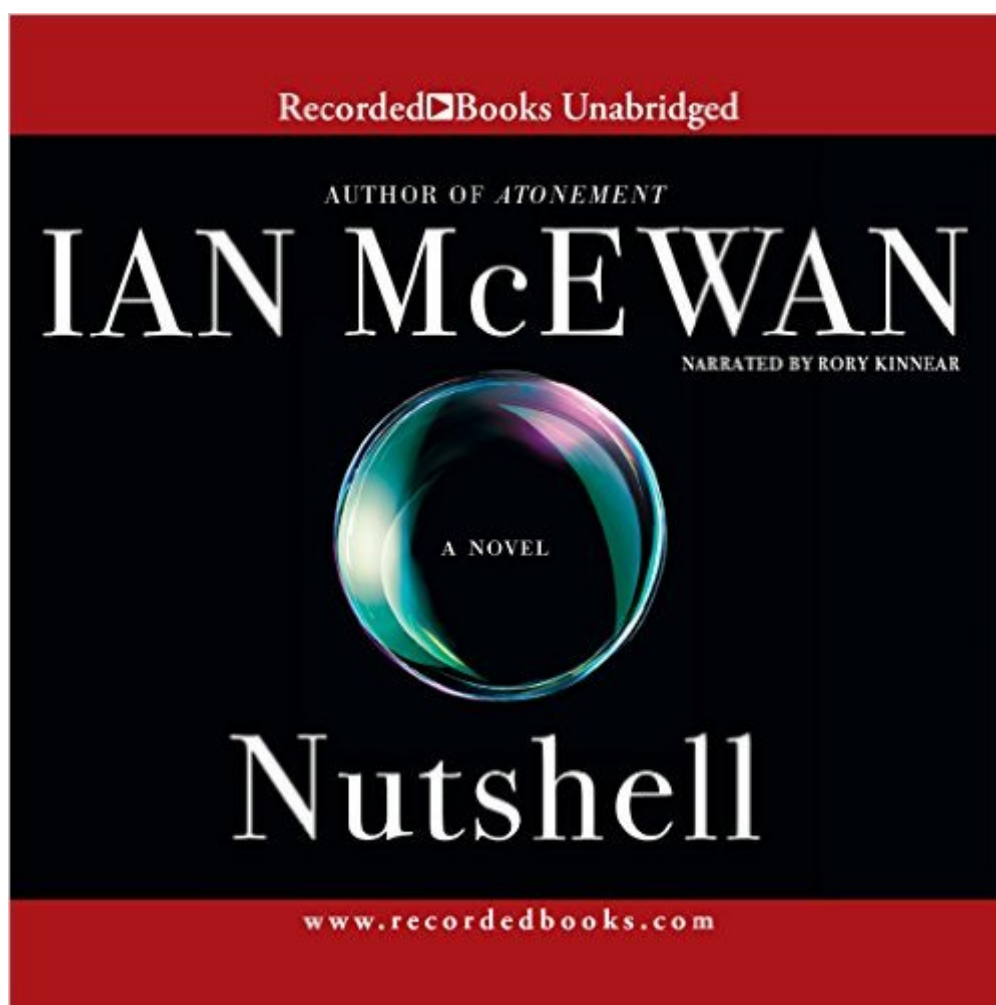


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Nutshell



Synopsis

New from the bestselling author of *Atonement* and *The Children Act* Trudy has betrayed her husband, John. She's still in the marital home "a dilapidated, priceless London townhouse" but John's not there. Instead, she's with his brother, the profoundly banal Claude, and the two of them have a plan. But there is a witness to their plot: the "inquisitive," nine-month-old resident of Trudy's womb. Told from a perspective unlike any other, *Nutshell* is a classic tale of murder and deceit from one of the world's master storytellers. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ian McEwan's gushing fans (professional critics included) are quite right: the man can surely write. Beautiful, clever, stunning and punning prose. There is ample evidence of his talent throughout his latest and I think slimmest effort in a while, *Nutshell*. It's a meager tale about a vile couple plotting a murder, loosely based on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Frankly, I'm not really sure why *Nutshell* has everyone reaching for their smelling salts. The conceit here is this is a tale told by a fetus, (occasionally full of sound and fury) from the womb of its mother and conspirator, Trudy. Apparently, magical realism, the literary tool of giants like Marquez, Morrison and Allende is also ideal to prop up an implausible premise or flesh out a story line. If you can't get your narrator there (because it's tough to move a woman in her 3rd trimester all over town), just have your fetus imagine dialog he isn't present to hear. It's gimmicks like this that have everyone a-tingle but I found hard to admire. Even the fetus is disagreeable--a snooty oenologist fussy about the Sancerre Trudy imbibes too often and able to pen novellas after listening to mum's podcasts these past months. Magical indeed. The cast of characters is an unappealing lot of English snoots,

snobs and yobs that seem to have fled an Evelyn Waugh novel. Mr. McEwan clearly had a crank on when writing Nutshell, not much liking people, places or the things his protagonist observes out in the awful, ugly world. Spoiled for him by all those (us?) Trudy's and Claude's too eager to kill lovers of poetry. One can only hope by getting that off his chest he can now put all that talent to better purpose. Which brings me to my last question, what is the point of this snitty-bitty book?

The narrator in Ian McEwan's "Nutshell" is a fetus in his mother, Trudy's, womb. Twenty-eight year old Trudy is nine months pregnant with her husband, John's, child. She has betrayed John by taking his brother, Claude, into her bed. Readers will be startled by the off-beat premise of a brilliant fetus who emotes like a college professor. Having listened to podcasts, radio shows, and other forms of entertainment during his sojourn in Trudy's uterus, he is probably more prepared for college than most high school students. He waxes philosophical about the state of the world, the perils of climate change, and his mother's volatile emotions. Most heartbreaking of all, he worries about his own fate, since Trudy seems to care nothing about his welfare. She and Claude behave like lovesick teenagers and imbibe large quantities of alcohol. Matters deteriorate when the fetus overhears Claude and Trudy plotting to commit an unspeakable crime. Although he is powerless to do anything but kick, the fetus hopes that the pair will quickly come to their senses. This is an original and darkly humorous novel by a wordsmith whose generally well-crafted but occasionally pretentious writing effectively portrays moods, attitudes, and settings. McEwan enables us, along with the growing fetus, to visualize what is happening. He toys with us, keeping us in suspense along with the poor baby-to-be, wondering how this daft soap opera will play out. There is a Shakespearean flavor to this melodrama; the Bard would relate to the characters' hubris, pettiness, and impulsiveness. McEwan implies that our collective foibles have led to the global catastrophe that is now unfolding. We have, it seems, learned nothing from having weathered conflict after bloody conflict.

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