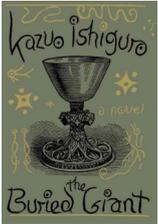


Relationships

The Buried Giant



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If you've read any of Kazuo Ishiguro's novels, you know that not only can he write beautiful prose but that he also weaves interesting, compelling stories.

For an author who has written about widely divergent themes: life among the British gentry and serving classes (*The Remains of the Day*) and a group of schoolchildren being farmed for body parts (*Never Let Me Go*), his latest takes a leap into entirely new directions.

Call it an on the road/historical/Arthurian/ attempt-to-find-and-slay-a-giant-novel. This giant, who lives in Britain after the Anglo Saxon wars, spumes up dense clouds that cause people to lose their memories.

Beatrice and Axl, two very old Britons, find themselves denied candles in their village, forced to spend their nights in the cold dark, and are treated shabbily in other ways. They decide to leave and attempt a long arduous journey to see their only child, a son, who has not returned to the village for many years. Beatrice suffers from an unnamed illness that makes her very frail but she's determined to see their son again.

Because of the endless polluted mists, neither she nor Axl can remember why their son left, or why he has not returned. Axl vaguely recalls an argument just before they parted, so the old couple want to make amends.

In one village where they spend the night, the residents mob a young boy who has a weird bite on his skin. They are so angry that Axl fears for the boy's life, and rushes to his rescue, but the mob attacks him instead. After leaving this village they find this boy again accompanied by a Saxon. Long ago, Axl fought against the Saxons, and the country is just starting to heal from the vicious wars.

Axl and Beatrice agree to travel with them, because the Saxon promises to help the couple reach their destination. They feel sorry for the boy too, but they are also leery of his bite.

While trying to cross a bridge, guards with swords detain them. When the Saxon sees them coming, he concocts a plan to play the fool. He also advises the couple to say that the boy has come with them. So the Saxon lolls his head, wags his tongue while the guards draw swords and prepare to spear him. But his disguise succeeds at least until the guard realizes later that the boy might be the boy bitten by the dragon, and chases them again.

The party also meets elderly Sir Gawain, one of the knights or Arthur's Round Table. The king has commanded him to slay the buried giant. At one point, the Saxon accuses him of not really trying to kill the beast. Why else would it still be alive?

The couple decide to visit a monastery even though it is out of the way and high on a mountain because they heard a monk there offers excellent counseling. But alas, the monastery was not what they thought. Around its windows and parapets, huge ravens swarm eager for bites of

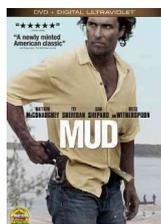
flesh. There is also a large tower that looks burnt, and has a suspicious platform on which it looks like battles have been fought, and enemies thrown off. Later the Saxon discovers a weird torture device in an out-building. And yes, those hungry ravens continue to batter the hatches. Ishiguro weaves history, Arthurian legend, and medieval fear of those different from us into a wonderful parable, but at heart, this is a story of a long marriage, how two people survive both the rough and calm seas of life, trying to bridge their differences, and caring for each other despite mistakes, arguments, hard feelings and the chaos of a world gone mad around them. For an entirely different take on England long ago, try Geraldine Brooks' [Year of Wonders: a novel of the plague.](#)

Posted by Dory L. on June 9, 2015

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[Dory L.'s blog](#)[Log in to post comments](#)

[Mud](#)



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There are times when everything in life seems just as clear as... mud. That's doubly true if you happen to spend lots of time scrounging the Mississippi River, which is exactly what the characters in the latest from [Jeff Nichols](#) (director of 2011's shamefully overlooked [Take Shelter](#)) do to get by. Centering on Ellis and Neckbone, two early-teens swamp rats who befriend a fugitive hiding out near their fishing spot, [Read more](#)

Posted by Ryan S. on October 9, 2013

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Acid, Projects, and Pit Bulls: Fiction by Paul Griffin



There are plenty of Young Adult books that portray the difficulties of being a teenager. Some are funny, some serious, and some are pretty dark. There's even a name for ones that focus on a specific issue -- the problem novel (you've got your teen pregnancy, drug abuse, suicide -- you name it). Some are great, but often times the more one topic takes center stage, the less realistic these books seem. It's never just one problem in real life, is it? For pretty much anyone at this age, times are hard all around. [Paul Griffin](#) writes about hard times. [Read more](#)

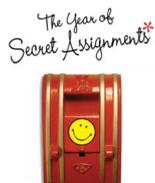
Posted by Chris H. on December 10, 2012

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The Year of Secret Assignments by Jaclyn Moriarty



Jaclyn Moriarty

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Lydia, Emily, and Cassie have been best friends through everything, guy problems, family issues and even Secret Assignments. While they all attend a posh private school, each girl has a unique way of expressing herself. Lydia sometimes declares that she is a fish, with the intention of becoming a writer someday. Emily's dream of becoming a lawyer might never gain steam if she can't remember the difference between cinnamon and synonym. And Cassie just wants to stop being too afraid to get up on stage and sing. This year their

English teacher has assigned them pen pals from public school Brookfield High to reacquaint them with the Joy of the Envelope. Over the course of the year they each get to know a stranger. Sebastian is an artistic soccer player who sometimes can't control his temper. Charlie is a sweet guy who always seems to be in trouble. And Matthew is either very dangerous or nonexistent. Prank calls, mistaken identities, spy missions, Dates with Girls, with a side of blackmail and revenge make for an interesting year!

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Posted by mreeves on July 11, 2012

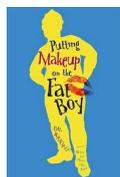
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Lambda Awards and LGBT YA Fiction



June is generally recognized as LGBT Pride Month. In honor of this, the Lambda

Awards were announced last week for excellence in LGBT literature. A long list of winners in a wide variety of categories can be found on their website.

The winner in the LGBT Children's/Young Adult category is *Putting Makeup on the Fat Boy* by Bil Wright. This novel is about high school student Carlos Duarte who is juggling a job at the Macy's makeup counter, a jealous boss, his sister's abusive boyfriend, and a difficult crush.

Booklist's review of Wright's novel remarks that "there's a whole lot going on in Wright's novel, but it's handled deftly and, for the most part, believably. Best of all, Carlos is not completely defined by his homosexuality. It is an important part of him, yes, but so are his ambition, his concern for his sister, and his capacity for friendship."

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Posted by sbowman on June 11, 2012

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- [Will Grayson, Will Grayson](#)

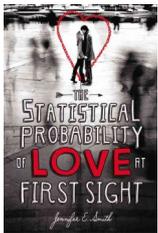
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The Statistical Probability of Love at First Sight



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I don't read enough young adult fiction, so when I came across *The Statistical Probability of Love at First Sight* with its intriguing title, I decided to jump in. It tells the story of seventeen-year-old Hadley Sullivan who is flying across the Atlantic to attend her father's wedding but only under duress.

"The Professor," as she tags him, left Connecticut a year ago for a four-month stint at Oxford, but never returned home to the family. He asked for a divorce from Hadley's mom, and Hadley has been seething ever since. Reluctantly, under pressure from both parents, she's boarding a plane at JFK International Airport.

The first thing that happens is she misses her plane. This really complicates things because she only gave herself a window of five hours from arrival at customs to being a bridesmaid at a London church. She gets scheduled on a jet three hours later. Hadley asks a woman to watch her bags and the woman angrily accuses her of breaking the law, but a handsome youth with a charming British accent offers to help. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on May 15, 2012

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