



Solace: A Novel

Belinda McKeon

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Belinda McKeon's *Solace* is an extraordinarily accomplished first novel—a story of a father and son thrown together by tragedy; one clinging to the old country and one plunging into the new. Set in an Ireland that catapulted into wealth at the end of the twentieth century and then suffered a swift economic decline, this is a novel about the conflicting values of the old and young generations and the stubborn, heartbreaking habits that mute the language of love.

Tom and Mark Casey are a father and son on a collision course, two men who have always struggled to be at ease with each other. Tom is a farmer in the Irish midlands, the descendant of men who have farmed the same land for generations. Mark, his only son, is a doctoral student in Dublin, writing his dissertation on the nineteenth-century novelist Maria Edgeworth, who spent her life on her family's estate, not far from the Casey farm. To his father, who needs help baling the hay and ploughing the fields, Mark's academic pursuit is not man's work at all, the occupation of a schoolboy. Mark's mother negotiates a fragile peace.

Then, at a party in Dublin, Mark meets Joanne Lynch, a lawyer in training whom he finds irresistible. She also happens to be the daughter of a man who once spectacularly wronged Mark's father, and whose betrayal Tom has remembered every single day for twenty years.

After the lightning strike of devastating loss, Tom and Mark are left with grief neither can share or fully acknowledge. Not even the magnitude of their mutual loss can alter the habit of silence. *Solace* is a beautiful and moving novel by one of the most exciting new writers to emerge from Ireland.

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