



Not the End of the World

By *Kate Atkinson*

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Arthur is a precocious eight-year-old boy whose mother is a B-list celebrity more concerned with her bank account than with her son's development. Then an enigmatic young nanny introduces him to a world he never knew existed.

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Not the End of the World By Kate Atkinson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Atkinson, who began her career with *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, a Whitbread Book of the Year, and enjoyed good reviews for two more novels, now gathers together this suite of comparatively loosely connected stories. Atkinson's work has grown increasingly diffuse; her most recent book, *Emotionally Weird*, was printed in three fonts, representing separate strings of narrative. This collection takes that conceit without the typesetting extravagance one step further, opening and closing on two women who seem to tell one another the intervening tales. Atkinson's Scheherazades, singletons of indeterminate age named Charlene and Trudi, appear first in "a food hall as vast as a small city," and by the book's end which may or may not be the end of the world they're starving to death in a squalid, freezing flat in what feels like an apocalyptic present. In the women's restless imaginations, readers meet more than one girlfriend (in different stories, and each unbeknownst to the other) of a man named Hawk; a gaggle of perfect-toothed American Zane sisters; and a governess who may or may not be a goddess. Some of Atkinson's devices a giant cat who impregnates a woman with kittens, an evil twin who gets to have all the fun make for stories as simple as fables, but some, like the nanny goddess and the virtuoso, multiple-voiced "Dissonance," are sharp and memorable, full of astutely observed family dynamics. While not as intense or as unified as Atkinson's full-length work, this is a sharp and wholly original collection.

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From [Booklist](#)

Although they don't carry quite the emotional weight of George Saunders' brilliant stories (*CivilWarLand in Bad Decline*, 1996), Atkinson's exceptionally entertaining tales display the same wild inventiveness. Sometimes the same characters and images (she is especially fond of wolf-skin gloves and Buffy the Vampire Slayer) recur in the 12 stories collected here, which, in the main, feature delightfully witty people marshaling their resources to confront a world that often disappoints. In "Unseen Translation," a nanny who resembles a "Marine Corps Mary Poppins" spirits eight-year-old Arthur away from his wealthy, neglectful parents. In the more somber "Sheer Big Waste of Love," Addison Fox, whose mother was a prostitute, carries with him the memory of being violently rejected by his wealthy father; however, an encounter with the man's legitimate children makes him realize things could have been much worse. Other titles feature people coping with the end of the world by going shopping and a woman killed in a car wreck who finds she is invisible, housebound, and addicted to *Oprah*. *Joanne Wilkinson*
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Review

"Those who already know Kate Atkinson's brilliant novels won't be surprised to find that her richly peopled stories are shot through with the same exhilarating disregard for decorum, the same scintillating wit and wisdom. NOT THE END OF THE WORLD is an exuberant, vivid, and hugely readable collection."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Irma Patterson:

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