

The Dating Game

Eliza French

Fiona Whitmore found it hard to believe that she honestly deserved the series of misfortunes her life had become. As she stood glaring at the long nail protruding from the front passenger-side tire of her two-door Honda Civic, she desperately wished she could remember what exactly her droning high school Driver's Ed teacher had set about changing a tire almost ten years ago. She went to rummage in the trunk of her car for a jack, something she was almost positive was essential to the task of changing a tire, and tried to ignore the chill of the light drizzle that had begun to fall from the cloudy sky. Her blonde curly hair frizzed and stuck to the sides of her face lankly. She was broken down on a corner of Alexander Street in Durham, North Carolina. Although she was a competent twenty-four year old woman in her second year of the graduate program in literature at Duke University, her close analysis of Marxist theorists didn't exactly prepare her to tackle the more practical issues in life – like car maintenance.

Her car had started to swerve against her steering minutes after pulling out of the Kyle's driveway, just the latest in a series of men with whom she had shared a prolonged and dissatisfying relationship. She was the one who had broken it off this time. Either way it happened, though, things usually ended in an eerily similar fashion. She was never sure where things went wrong or what caused the hideous and gradual transformation of the man she thought had such potential into the single most consistent source of distress and frustration in her life.

All of this had brought her here, holding a metal object she suspected was the jack the diagram in the car manual illustrated. With a section of her dissertation sitting back at her apartment, waiting to be completely overhauled per her advisor's suggestion, she cast her eyes about for the any sign of the approaching lights of an upcoming vehicle. She couldn't bear to call Kyle, and as she ran through her friends in her head, she was unsure which ones would actually be capable of changing a tire. Relying on the kindness of strangers after the sunset in Dur-

ham was generally an exercise in futility and certainly something Fiona would have considered against her best interest under any other circumstance. When the first car finally did pass by, she almost couldn't bring herself to flag it down. Her desperation finally got the best of her and she waved her arms frantically by the side of the road to get the driver's attention. The car's squeaky breaks brought it to a slow stop behind her.

The man who got out of the car, which she would have judged as rundown looking had her own car not been rendered inoperable at the moment, looked to be around her age. He was nondescript looking and had a slight enough build for her not to feel physically threatened. He thought she was the ideal good Samaritan to cross her path, until he introduced himself as Rob and confessed that he couldn't change a tire. He did know someone who worked at the nearest garage and could probably help her get her car towed for free. As they chatted about her pathetic situation, she found out he had graduated the summer before from the Classical Studies graduate program at Duke, and was waiting in Durham until he was either hired as an assistant professor or published.

Fiona felt comfortable enough to take the lift home he offered, although she was caught off-guard when he asked for her number as she left the car. She hadn't felt the initial spark of attraction. He was out of school, unemployed, incapable of changing a tire, and driving an aging Volvo station wagon. Still, he had taken the time to help her out of a situation that her own poor judgment and ineptitude had put her in. She thought back to her misguided dissertation and her love life's recent checkered past – both equally riddled with errors. She decided it was time she started questioning her instincts, so she wrote her number on a scrap of paper and said she hoped to hear from him soon. He smiled and watched her run through the rain up the steps to her door.

At the Joyce the next night, Fiona sat next to her friend Rachel at their usual spot by the bar. The two talked idly about the rumors that one student in their program had taken up with the Chair of the department, and debated whether affairs with one's instructor was truly worth the potential benefits, considering the substantial risks in the world of academia.

Fiona remained half-listening, sipping one of her usual drinks, and scanning the moderately crowded room for the men she usually let buy them for her. She found that, as she feared, after a year in Durham she had exhausted her viable options for male companionship. She had met everyone standing in the room she had ever wanted to meet, and she could hardly stir up the interest to make the charming acquaintance of those she hadn't. She swirled the bottom of her drink in her empty cup, remembering the early class she TA'ed in the morning and the late night she had had grading papers the night before. She was considering letting her exhaustion pull her in the right directions – home and to bed – when she heard an unfamiliar voice replacing Rachel's beside her.

Turning, she saw a man hugging Rachel warmly and giving her a kiss on the cheek.

"Ian! I had no idea you were back from volunteering in Mexico!" Rachel exclaimed in pleasant surprise.

That was the distinct look he had, Fiona decided, that at first she hadn't been able to pinpoint. Attractive, lightly tanned, slightly sunburned, but bespectacled and sincere-looking. Just back from Mexico – on a service trip.

Fiona had seen Rachel fake social graces and pleasantries before, she was a natural, but she recognized genuine happiness in her friend's face. After hands were extended and introductions exchanged, Fiona couldn't hide the smile on her face, either.

Ian, a medical student at Duke, knew Rachel's older brother from prep school. Ian came home with Rachel's brother on breaks on a regular basis, so Rachel and Ian had almost grown up together. He was happy to have found Rachel, he insisted on buying both Rachel and Fiona a round and giving them an overview of his six months, spent in clinics in Tijuana.

Fiona only realized how late it had gotten when she stifled a yawn an hour later. Ian still hadn't run out of funny anecdotes or little-known facts about medical care south of the border. As reluctant as she was to leave Rachel and her childhood friend, she slowly got up from the bar and started saying good night.

"O God, and we've only just met. Have I bored you to death already with my stories?" Ian joked.

Fiona quickly explained it was nothing like that, spouting a list of her obligations early the next day and the added complication of having her car in the shop. She hugged Rachel goodbye, and turned to Ian.

"I'd love to see you again sometime," he said in a surprisingly earnest tone.

Either the drinks or her fatigue made her feel slightly giddy as they exchanged numbers before she headed outside to get a cab. Maybe her usual hang-out, and the usual crowd, were serving her better than she thought. Ian was just the type she hoped to meet every time she went out, and, admittedly, thought she had once or twice before.

The harsh buzzing of Fiona's phone ringing against her desk filled her tiny office in the Carr building and startled her back into consciousness of her surroundings. She glanced at the time display on her phone before answering – 3:45, almost an hour past the end of the office hours she had to hold twice a week for the students in her discussion section. She had spent the last few hours - after the few undergrads hoping to get their grades changed on their last midterm had admitted defeat – alternately deciphering the red scrawl on the latest pages of her dissertation and pouring over databases on her computer for obscure primary resources.

Visions of Ian the other night at the Joyce briefly danced through her head as she accepted the call from the unfamiliar number flashing on her caller id.

The unexpected voice that greeted her quickly dispelled these thoughts.

“Hi, Fiona? It’s me.”

After drawing a blank for a few seconds, she realized it was Rob, who had rescued her from the flat tire in the rain. They made plans for dinner that night at Toast, and when she hung up she looked forward to seeing him.

When they walked in the restaurant, Fiona knew he had carefully calculated the choice of venue. It had a casual atmosphere, and relatively inexpensive prices, but still had an air of pretension in its impressive menu. He dressed in the same constructed casual way in broken-in jeans with a crisp, bright button-front shirt. He smoothed his hair nervously - an unconscious tic- but Fiona couldn’t sense his anxiety otherwise. They kept up relaxed conversation throughout the meal, and he never overwhelmed her with first date questions or stifled her with nervous attention. They shared each other’s food and split a bottle of cheap wine. He commiserated with her frustrations over her dissertation. She laughed as he detailed the trials and tribulations of his vain attempts to publish his first article with self-deprecating humor.

When the check came, he asked if she wanted to head somewhere close by for a drink. Even though she turned down his offer to extend their evening, she had been pleasantly surprised as his easy company and their good chemistry. She made the pseudo-legitimate excuse of the long day behind her and the long night of work ahead of her. With complete sincerity, she said she wanted to see him again, soon, and promised this time she would call him. As they drove back through the empty streets of downtown Durham, she studied Rob’s features as the streetlights and occasional headlights starkly highlighted them against the dark. He turned to give her a half-smile and take her hand, and she thought he was the only good that had ever come from having a flat tire.

Ian called more than a week after they first met. She had just opened the door to her apartment as her phone rang, and she rummaged through the miscellaneous contents of her purse to dig it out. She flipped it open with her chin as she pulled her keys from the lock and kicked the door shut behind her.

He identified himself and reminded her of how they met, but he didn’t have to.

“Ian! Rachel’s friend!” she immediately burst in to interrupt him, “ I had wondered if I would hear from you.”

If her eagerness came through, she was too happy he called to care.

He explained that he had two tickets to a show at Cat’s Cradle that night because his friends who bought them realized too late they had to be out of town this weekend, and he thought it would be a good chance to take her out and get to know her better. He apologized for the short notice, but he told her the show had been sold out for a month, so it would be such a waste not to use them. Fiona confessed that she hadn’t been to a concert since being an undergraduate at UVA, and that she would love to go. They agreed he would pick her up in two hours.

She hurriedly jumped in the shower, dried her hair, put on make-up, threw on a flattering outfit, and was pushing aside the piles of books and stacks of papers on her living room floor when the bell rang. From the moment she opened the door and saw the genuine smile on Ian’s face, Fiona knew she would enjoy the night. During the ride to Chapel Hill, entertained her with stories from his week, of pompous surgeons and eccentric patients. The opening band had almost finished their set by the time they arrived at the venue. Ian and Fiona joined the stream of people moving toward the stage and wove their way through to the center of the crowd. The headlining act, She & Him, played energetically and hit the notes, particularly in the duets, perfectly.

The energy of the performance, the pulse of the crowd, and her close proximity to Ian exhilarated Fiona. A friend called Ian and invited him to a party as they milled toward the exit after the show. It was already late, but Fiona readily Ian’s invitation to go with him. They drove up to his friend’s apartment just before 1 a.m. His friends greeted them both warmly, poured them a drink, and quickly drew them in to their conversation. They were witty and boisterous and took every opportunity to make jokes at Ian’s expense in front of Fiona. Surrounded by

One drink turned into several drinks and 1 a.m. turned into 4 a.m. The noisy conversation diminished to murmuring among smaller groups as the guests sobered trickled out. Fiona and Ian made their way around the room saying their goodbyes, and Fiona realized she had made a few friends throughout the course of the night. In the car, Ian's stomach growled. He laughed in embarrassment, but Fiona admitted she was starving, too. On the way back to Durham, they stopped by a cheap drive-thru biscuit kitchen. They pulled off on a side road and spread the grease-soaked bags out on their laps. They washed down buttery chunks of biscuit with gulps of sickly sweet iced tea.

Back on 15-501, brushing crumbs from their shirts and oily slicks from their mouths, they laughed the night. Ian told Fiona he was sure his friends would insist to see more of her soon – and so would he. They sat in subdued contentment for the rest of the drive. Ian dropped of Fiona as the sun was rising Fiona slowly climbed the stairs to her apartment, turned the lock, and fell into bed – exhausted but smiling.

Ever since Kyle had broken up with her, Fiona had been living in silent dread of the day Kyle would call. They had said they would “be friends”, of course. Although the two had gone a month without really talking – not in a malicious way, just as a matter of course – Fiona knew Kyle was just stubborn enough to follow up on his word. If he had said they would still be friends after they're relationship ended, he would see to it that they maintain at least a perfunctory friendship.

She was hardly surprised when she woke up to find one of his “Hey, it's me,” voicemails waiting on her phone one morning. He had gone just long enough without contacting her to feign indifference, while still being able to maintain the guise of a friend who has just been too busy to call earlier. In the message, he suggested the two “catch up” over a friendly cup of coffee. Fiona didn't see a problem meeting in a public place for some casual conversation between friends. She called back and confirmed the place and time. They shared a pleasant enough, if brief, exchange. He offered to pick her up at 1:00 the next

day.

After talking to him, she had very few misgivings about actually seeing him. Her emotions had calmed; her feelings had changed. The only thing hard about being friends with him would be staying interested in what he had to say, not keeping her true feelings at bay.

He stood outside her apartment the next day the picture of calculated nonchalance - leaning against his BMW, hands in his pockets. Everything about his look, right down to the well-worn jeans was premeditated to project “relaxed” when he couldn't have been.

They made small talk in the car about his work on his dissertation and the recent exploits of a few mutual friends. Kyle seemed composed enough, but Fiona picked up his underlying anxiety from his compulsive ruffling of his hair. Over coffee, they continued to chat, and Fiona could hardly believe she was enjoying his company. Even though she had long since fallen out of love with him, she had missed his familiar habits and his particular brand of self-deprecatd humor.

After an hour or so of light conversation that at reacquainted them after such a long time of not talking, Kyle leaned forward to her.

“Listen,” he said in a confiding tone, “There's a reason I called.”

The look in his eyes put Fiona on guard. He admitted that he had been struggling ever since their break up. He knew it didn't make sense since he had been the one to end things, but he was sure now he needed Fiona in his life.

Fiona put her palm to her forehead, rubbing her temples to soothe her frustration and confusion. She then explained to Kyle, as gently as possible, that all possibility of re-kindling any sort of romance between the two of them had vanished. She had met other great people, and she was sure he would, too.

He refused to beg for a reconciliation, which relieved Fiona, but he did get her to agree to a more active friend-

ship. They agreed to talk regularly and see each other once a week. Fiona suspected Kyle thought he could somehow woo her back, but she wasn't worried about the possibility in the slightest. They hugged goodbye, and Kyle said he would call soon. She couldn't hide her bemusement at the entire situation, but she had to admit to herself that it was somehow vindicating.

As three weeks went by, Fiona's life fell into the steady rhythm. During the week, she taught class, met with her advisors, had lunch or coffee with Kyle, and went out with Rob, who was always free on weekdays due to his employment status. On the weekends, she did research, caught up with friends, and saw Ian, who usually worked at the hospital in between his grueling schedule of classes during week. Both Ian and Rob knew vaguely of the other's existence, and neither had pushed for exclusivity at such an early phase of the respective relationships. Fiona equally appreciated Rob's thoughtfulness and Ian's spontaneity. Despite Rachel's incessant questioning about her and Ian, she felt she spent her time valuably with both of them, and wasn't rushing to decide between the two.

Also, her potentially disastrous friendship with Kyle gave her an outlet of relaxation. Kyle subtly brought up his feelings every so often, but other than that she liked spending time with someone who knew her so well. She almost forgot their particular dissatisfactions and annoyances with each other that had prompted their break-up. Sometimes they would meet up with a group of mutual friends, some of whom she thought she would never see again after she and Kyle had split. She had never really been friends with an ex before, and her experience with Kyle made her question this. Although she avoided discussing Ian and Rob specifically with him, Kyle knew she was dating and she encouraged him to do the same.

Fiona tried to explain all of this to Rachel when her friend stopped by for lunch one day, hoping to find out as many details on her relationship as Ian as possible.

"I don't know...this new thing with Kyle, that we can actually be friends, was so unexpected. It's changed

things for me."

"I don't understand," Rachel started skeptically, "I thought you were over him."

"I am, it's just that it's different seeing him in this light. We weren't really friends before we started dating, you know. Just being friends with him, I barely notice the little things about him that used to irritate me so much. "

"Or right, like his excessive, pity-me, self-deprecating humor? He was always making fun of himself, pas the point of it being funny. He could get so down on him self and try to pass it off as his attempt at humor. I couldn't understand how you could stand being around someone so much who really just everyone to feel sorry for him," Rachel remarked.

"He definitely hasn't let that go, but I guess he isn't as interested in getting my sympathy anymore," Fiona mused, "I normally find that type of humor appeal but Kyle really took it to far. Like with Rob, he gets it just right. He always has some story about his rejections for publishing, but he can really laugh at himself. Not like Kyle, who only was interested in getting me to feel sorry for him. Rob wants to get me to laugh, and he really does. I'm not trying to say Kyle's bad traits have magically disappeared or anything"

"So he still does the hair thing, too?" Rachel asked.

"God, that used to *kill* me. He still does it, but I don't care as much. Before, I could tell he was hiding something, wasn't quite being honest with me when he was nervously ruffling but trying to seem so calm and colleted. He always thought he had this cool exterior, but I could always tell exactly when he was lying, and it drove me crazy. You know, Rob actually had that same sort of nervous tic, except it's different, almost endearing. I can tell when he fidgets and smoothes down his hair I make him nervous," Fiona smiled through the phone.

"Oh great, you make a boy nervous! What are we, fifteen again now?"

"C'mon," Fiona nudged, "Admit it. It's just nice to know you can make someone a little flustered sometimes. Rob always has something thoughtful planned for us to do, so I can tell he didn't just call me up out of boredom. He took me to this creamery in Chapel Hill that makes fresh ice cream the other day I didn't even know existed," she trailed off a moment, "It's funny, whenever Kyle used to try to plan out our days I always resented him for it. He made everything feel so calculated. With Rob, I can tell he just wants to spend our time together doing something he knows will be fun."

"All right, all right," Rachel sighed "I get it. Rob is turning out to be better than you thought. But what about Ian? I really thought you two were going to be great. He asked me about you after that first night. Trust me, you make him nervous, too."

"I like him. I'm obviously attracted to him, and we have a good time together. I just don't know what to make of him."

"What do you mean? What's left to figure out besides that?"

"I just feel like I have nothing to compare him to. At first I just went out with Rob because I figured...why not? I'd just broken up with Kyle, and I hadn't met Ian. When I did meet Ian, I was happy he got my number and everything. The way I had it in my mind, I'd go on one date with Rob, see that I wasn't wrong in initially not being attracted, and then start dating Ian. But now...Rob just seems like everything I had with Kyle but better. Ian seems nice, and I was definitely more attracted to him than Rob at first, but I feel like I let myself get carried away with my physical attraction to him. I have nothing else really concrete to go on with him."

"Well, don't write him off just yet," Rachel warned.

"I won't," Fiona promised, "but I will if I start to feel like I'm leading him on."

After Fiona had laid the entire situation out for Rachel like this, she realized how much her impression of Ian and Rob had changed since she had gotten to know them better and since Kyle had come back into her life.

Ian disrupted this steady rhythm one night when he and Fiona were in his kitchen, making a recipe he learned while in Mexico.

"I just don't understand why you need to keep seeing," Ian said, forcefully chopping onions in his agitation into a fine mince.

"I don't understand why it's bothering you all of a sudden," Fiona protested, "We're not exclusive. I told you about him from the beginning... it's nothing serious or anything."

"That's just the problem," he explained as he cleared off the cutting-board into the pan, "I know you can't be serious about him, but it's stopping you from being serious about us."

"Well, maybe you're right, but things are going so well between us. I don't see why anything has to change"

"Because I want them to. I need some sort of commitment from you. How about this? Every time that you see Rob, you have to wait a week before seeing me."

"What?" she asked, somewhat taken aback.

"Every time you see him, you're setting us back. I feel like we're just wasting time. So each date you have with him, we'll wait a week before seeing each other. I want you to know how I feel. I want you to know how frustrating it is for us to miss the opportunity to really be together for no good reason."

Part of Fiona reeled from being issued what sounded suspiciously like an ultimatum, but part of her saw his point. Even she had started to wonder why she was still seeing Rob, especially since she and Ian had been as compatible as she hoped. She didn't understand how her seeing even less of Ian was supposed to help them establish a more committed relationship, but who was she to argue? Since she hadn't figured things out her own way, she didn't see on what grounds she could object to Ian proposing this alternative.

“Ok,” Fiona agreed, “sounds fair. I’m seeing him tomorrow night, actually. So I’ll call you a week from tomorrow?”

“Alright,” he answered with a relieved smile, “I’ll look forward to hearing from you then.”

That settled the matter, and they checked the sizzling pan, set the table, and spread out the food. She stayed late into the night, both of them knowing they would have to wait to see each other again. After she finally said good night to Ian and got in her car, she checked her phone and listened to a voicemail from Rob. For the first time, she seriously deliberated calling him back. The next morning, she shook off what she considered her foolish and unfair hesitation and returned Rob’s call, confirming plans to meet that afternoon. Later, they decided they didn’t need irrationally impose rules about when they could see each other. They didn’t discuss being exclusive, but Fiona made it clear she was less interested now in Rob.

Over the next month, she saw Ian just three times. She normally saw Rob twice in row, since she and Ian had agreed it would be ridiculous to accumulate weeks before the original week ended. They went out to the bars or his apartment, mostly in the evenings after she was done with classes and work on her dissertation. Even though they went on dates so frequently, she rarely spent more than three or four hours with him. Every time she saw Ian, they spent the entire day together, making the most of the time they had together before another week of no contact. For some reason, Fiona noticed this made her time with Ian more exciting in a way. She spent longer getting ready, was slightly anxious beforehand, and even planned on of their days together herself. Ian asked about Rob occasionally, but only to acknowledge their arrangement and show that he wasn’t motivated by jealousy. Fiona still liked meeting Rob, and still called him despite its consequences for her relationship with Ian, but their more frequent dates didn’t lead to a corresponding familiarity with each other. Fiona actually felt she knew fewer details of Rob’s life because they rarely had the opportunity for the extended, in-depth conversa-

tion she and Ian had together.

After her third date with Ian that month, she didn’t call Rob. Instead, she called Ian two days later to ask him to dinner, and she could hear the delighted surprise in his voice.

Fiona called Kyle the next Thursday afternoon to see if he wanted to get dinner somewhere on Ninth Street. The phone rang longer than usual, and his voicemail recording started before he finally picked up. After she asked him about his plans later that night, he sounded uneasy. After some coaxing, but he finally conceded that their friendship wasn’t working for him. He realized he would never get over her if he kept spending some much time around her. He had just started dating again, and he wanted to give the women he was meeting a fair chance. Fiona was shocked, considering their arrangement had suited her so well, but she resisted the temptation to be selfish and argue for him to maintain their relationship as it stood now. Instead, she just made him promise to keep in touch every so often, keep her updated on the very basics of his life, and told him she would do the same.

She hated to let a friend slip away, and she felt a compulsion to fill the time she would have filled with Kyle. She dialed Rob’s number, knowing he would be free, and asked him to dinner, instead. During the next two weeks, she continued to replace Kyle with Rob. At first, she was afraid this would draw her back into her vacillation between Ian and Rob. That was before she noticed a change in Rob she assumed had happened gradually but escaped her attention before now.

One afternoon in her apartment, Rob regaled her with another of his stories about his amusingly stinging rejection letters. To her surprise, Fiona found herself forcing the laughter that used to come so easily when she was with him. Even his own laughter sounded hollow to her, as if it tried to conceal his self-pity and pervasive self-doubt.

His article remained unpublished, despite his submissions to countless peer-reviewed journals. She saw it too in his careful planning and deliberate appearance – he just wasn't sure of himself. Fiona thought the trials of post-graduate life had finally shaken his self-confidence, but regardless of what caused the shift in his personality, or her perception of it, her attraction to him faded.

She explained this to him, in what she hoped were more palatable terms, right away, after his joke fell flat, and he looked at her like he already knew what she was going to say. She admitted she had been thinking of him as just a friend for the past few weeks. He looked crestfallen for just a moment, then brushed it off by making a joke at his own expense, just as predicted. He stayed over only half an hour longer. Their conversation eventually ran out of steam, awkwardly lagging and petering out. Fiona had said all she could. She wanted Rob to understand how she had been feeling through all of this, but it seemed impossible because she was so confused herself about how she had ever seriously considered Rob a good match for her. Even though they parted ways amicably enough, Fiona doubted she would ever hear from Rob again.

Later that night, Fiona sat next to Ian on the couch at this friend's apartment, the same place where the party had been on the night of their first date. His friends were just as inclusive as they had been on that first night, and by now she knew them well. Rachel and a few of her friends were invited tonight, too. Leaning her head against his shoulder, she marveled at how perfectly they fit in with each other's friends and into each other's lives. She couldn't imagine could ever being unsure of her feelings for him, or considering anyone else over him, even though she had still hesitated as recently as a month ago. She would never know what clouded her intuitions throughout their relationship, but she was grateful she came to the rational decision in the end.

Afterword

Featured Principles

I hoped to illustrate two principles of irrational economics in this short story – the “closed door” experiment and the effect of asymmetric dominance. I introduce the effect of asymmetric dominance first, when Kyle calls Fiona. Asymmetric dominance occurs when a third option enters the playing field that was previously only occupied by two options that are roughly equal, such that the economic agent has no clear preference for either option. (In terms of people, one may be more good-looking and the other more intelligent, but considering overall total attractiveness they are roughly equivalent.) The third option will be similar to one of the original two, but slightly less attractive. It makes that similar original option look better by comparison to itself as well as to the third option. In the story, when Kyle comes back into Fiona’s life, his similarities to Rob make Rob more desirable in comparison, and thus Ian seems less desirable also. When Kyle decides he can’t be friends with Fiona anymore, the effect his presence had on Fiona’s perception of Rob changes.

The “closed door” experiment shows that an economic agent immediately develops a greater preference for something once her access to it becomes limited. In Fiona’s case, once she knows she can no longer see Ian, she values her time with him more. She also changes the behavior (seeing Rob) that results in her being less able to see Ian. In conjunction with the fading effects of asymmetric dominance, the closed door experiment causes Fiona to view Ian more favorably and judge Rob more harshly. In the end, Fiona is grateful for having come to her senses and made the “rational decision.” Even though she thought she and Ian would be more compatible from the beginning, the reader should doubt whether her choice was rational and whether she consciously made the choice at all. The story demonstrates the factors that manipulate all of our decisions, even in the personal realm of dating and love, where we often acknowledge that our preferences change, but we rarely attribute this change to external factors.

About the Author

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