



Chocolate for Breakfast

Martha Reynolds

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Young Bernie (Bernadette) Maguire is in for the journey of a lifetime when her junior year abroad takes her to Fribourg Switzerland. Ripe for love and adventure she is seduced by a handsome Swiss banker. She is horrified when she discovers she's pregnant. Protected and befriended by those who help to keep her secret for as long as possible, this moving rite-of-passage tale will warm the heart as a young woman struggles with an all-too-familiar dilemma. Yet after the unexpected death of her father, Bernie's life takes some unexpected turns that will take decades to resolve.

VOTED 2012 WOMEN'S FICTION BOOK OF THE YEAR BY TURNING PAGES!!

Chocolate for Breakfast Details

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From Reader Review Chocolate for Breakfast for online ebook

K.C. Wilder says

Martha Reynolds knows how to let a story unfold. Bernie Maguire isn't alone on her journey through Fribourg, Switzerland and beyond; the reader is right there, like a friend trailing a pace or two behind. Reynolds' writing style is organic and unfussy, which I love. She has a keen sense of the little quirks and mannerisms that make her characters unique, and she allows them to speak for themselves. At times, this novel felt wonderfully reminiscent of favorites by Maeve Binchy or Anne Rivers Siddons, but Reynolds' style - and her story - are truly unique. I enjoyed Chocolate for Breakfast immensely, and I am happily moving on to Chocolate Fondue.

Meredith Schorr says

When Bernie Maguire arrives in Switzerland to begin her junior year in college abroad, she is determined to leave her virginity behind. And leave it she does, however, sometimes decisions have their consequences and Bernie winds up pregnant without a baby daddy. With the help of her best friend and some extremely big-hearted "grown-ups", she is forced to decide how to handle the unwanted pregnancy and the decision she makes ends up having a profound effect on her life.

Although I read this book in just a few days, it was not a fluffy or lighthearted read. It toyed with some serious issues and had some sad moments. It was, however, thoroughly enjoyable and kept my rapt attention throughout. I worried about Bernie right along with her friends and I cared what would happen to her. Although I found myself shaking my head at some of her behavior, I forgave her - she was 20 years old and naive. I absolutely adored her supportive best friend Lisa and her friend Timmy, who I thought was perfectly crafted as a college guy taking advantage of his youth and freedom. The author's descriptions of Switzerland put me right in the scene and although I am not even a "chocoholic", I found myself craving chocolate while reading. Towards the end, I found the story to be a bit depressing and I was concerned with how the story would conclude but the author turned things around and I finished with a smile on my face and a desire to see what would happen next for Bernie. I will definitely be picking up the sequel, Chocolate Fondue and hope that Bernie will find the love and happiness she deserves - better late than never.

Wendy Janes says

Bernadette (Bernie) and a group of fellow students travel to Fribourg, Switzerland for their junior year. She loses her virginity to a handsome Swiss banker, and falls pregnant. The decisions Bernie makes next have repercussions that will resonate down the years.

This story brings vividly to life how a lovely, intelligent young woman can think and act foolishly when it comes to men. Her naivety is very convincing, and her feelings and reactions when she finds out that she's pregnant are totally believable. The choices she makes may not be the ones that all readers would make, but the success of this story rests on the creation of a character who readers can completely invest in.

Bernie's relationships with her fellow students and the way she's looked after and protected by those around her are well described, and the author clearly has a love of Fribourg, and chocolate.

I will admit to disappointment on discovering the type of person that Bernie grows up to be, and I think this section, set decades later, needs a little more detail to make it feel as real as the earlier chapters.

I have just purchased the sequel, Chocolate Fondue, because I'm hoping to learn a little more about those missing decades, and I want to find out whether the possibility of redemption, maybe even a happy ending, suggested in the final pages of Chocolate for Breakfast will be fulfilled.

Tia Bach says

Bernie is ready to experience life and love, and what better place than her trip abroad to Switzerland. From the moment she gets on the plane, she's determined to shed her former life. Mere days into her new adventure, she is swept off her feet and enjoys some intense moments of seduction.

Unfortunately, the handsome man is a playboy and disappears quickly. Just as Bernie starts to move on, she realizes she's pregnant and everything changes. Friends offer support, but ultimately Bernie has to make her own decision. No path is easy, and no decision is without its own scars.

The decision haunts Bernie years later and affects every facet of her life, including her choices in love and her relationship with her family. One simple night of reckless abandon costs her so much.

Don't let the title fool you, this is no run-of-the-mill light romance. The author creates a rich depth in Bernie's dilemma while avoiding getting preachy. While it was a bit slow to start, I found myself getting pulled into Bernie's life and choices. I hope you will, too.

I read in the author's bio that she is considering writing a sequel, and I hope she does. Bernie has so much more life to live, and I want to know she gets the opportunity to come out of the shadows of her decision. She deserves to be loved, and to love herself.

Recommended for readers who can embrace a flawed character, but one who finds a way into your heart.

Note: I received a complimentary copy for review purposes. A positive review was not requested or guaranteed; the opinions expressed are my own.

Cat Lavoie says

Amazing book! Chocolate for Breakfast is the kind of novel that stays in your head even after you've finished reading it. I connected with Bernie and her quest for adventure in a foreign land. She's flawed but I think that's what makes her a great character. I rooted for her throughout this novel and (when I got to the end of the last page) I was sad that the journey was over. Beautifully written, this book made me long for Switzerland and cozy cafés with delicious pastries. I am definitely looking forward to reading Martha Reynolds' next novel!

Connie says

I hadn't read anything by this author before but since it was a free kindle book I decided to give it a try. And I'm glad I did because it was a very good book! Humor and romance all rolled into one novel. I can't wait to read more books by this author.

Isabella says

"Chocolate for Breakfast" has been on my TBR list for a long time, so I was very eager to start this book.

I planned to only read the first chapter of this book since I was on the treadmill, but I ended up reading more than that because the book captured my attention with Bernie taking off for Switzerland.

All the characters had their own personalities, but Bernie was my favorite. As a young woman who was eagerly wanting to be a grown up, not only did she seem mature, she appeared to know what she wanted. During her adventures in Switzerland, Bernie had several life changing events. From thinking she's in love with a banker and losing her virginity to him, becoming pregnant, and losing a family member that she's close to, Bernie had quite a lot on her plate. With the help of her friends (old and new), she survived it all.

There were a lot of twists and turns, some that I didn't expect, which made it a quick read. One thing that I liked about the end was that I got to see where Bernie was years later in her life, which was interesting to me because she was very different. Though it was sensed, the only thing that I wish there could've been more of was seeing more tension between Bernie and her mother.

Martha Reynolds is a very talented author who has written an unforgettable book about a young woman's journey during her time away from home. I cried, laughed, and cried more. This was the first book I read by Martha Reynolds, and it's not my last. Right now I'm reading the next book in Martha's Chocolate Series, "Chocolate Fondue". If you're looking for a wonderful, quick read, with a lot of heart, I recommend "Chocolate for Breakfast".

I give this book 5 stars!

Christine London says

They say to write what you know and this debut author has done so with visceral imagery and heart. Although the heroine may be impulsive and make poor choices she is believable as a girl who has yet to feel the sting of those choices. The magical thinking of youth 'that could never happen to me' - does and Bernie is left to make the tough decisions of an adult.

It makes no sense to mark a novel down because the characters do not act the way you would. It is to the author's credit that she has portrayed a girl who plays life as a game for her enjoyment- as so many young people do. Heroine Bernie has no malice or ill intent and thus is a likable girl. The setting is a charming

character on its own; the sexual naivety and freedoms of the pre-AIDs generation well portrayed.

I would have enjoyed seeing into the mother daughter relationship and experienced an older Bernie who had grown in maturity and self esteem, but that is not the reality in so many instances. A bittersweet novel that will keep you turning the pages as you hope for a brighter future for Bernadette.

Beth says

I wish I could give this 2 1/2 stars since I was somewhere between liking it and thinking it was just okay--- but since I ended up reading the entire thing in two days I apparently liked it enough to give it three. The story was interesting -- American college girl goes to university in Switzerland for a year and gets pregnant-- - but I found it lacking in a number of areas. I never did like the main character, Bernie, all that much and liked/understood her less and less as the novel went on. It often seemed rushed, and I didn't ever feel any real connection with Bernie and her terrible situation -- it was almost as if I was reading a newspaper report about it. I kept expecting more of the other characters too-- they were all very predictable and almost stereotypes: the Supportive Best Friend, the Hottie Party Boy, the Caring Doctor, the Interesting Landlady Whose Character Never Developed At All. And what happened to the teeny strange elderly lady down the hall??

The last part of the novel takes a very abrupt shift in time and viewpoint which hit me as unsettling and clunky. I would have really liked more integration of the past and the present, but not in such a sudden and limited way. It wasn't terrible; it just could have been a whole lot better.

Darcie Czajkowski says

Young, naïve, and inexperienced, Bernadette “Bernie” Maguire has a mission when she and her best friend Lisa travel to Fribourg, Switzerland for their junior year of college. Bernie’s goal of losing her virginity proves easy, too easy in fact, when she sets her sights on Karl Berset, an attractive Swiss banker. She willingly becomes intimate with him, but after a single passionate weekend together, he disappears from her life and from Fribourg entirely.

Almost immediately, Bernie knows she is pregnant. She quietly keeps her secret, initially sharing only with Lisa and Lisa’s landlady, Erika Stangl. She goes about her normal life, attending classes, spending time with Lisa, and even drinking the occasional beer with her classmates at Café des Espouses in town.

But events start to spiral further out of control when Bernie becomes intimate with a classmate who is unaware of her pregnancy, experiences the loss of someone close to her, and stumbles upon the shocking reason why Karl vanished from her life, as if she had imagined their affair altogether.

Twenty-three years later, Bernie is still dealing with the consequences of those transient moments with Karl. Her life is an emotional mess and, after her mother’s passing, she decides that she no longer wants to live her life in a self-destructive way. With her aunt in tow, Bernie returns to Fribourg and, upon arriving at Hotel de la Rose, she finds her past literally staring back at her.

Will Bernie have the courage to face the decisions she made all those years ago? Will she be able to reconcile the girl who first landed in Switzerland with the woman she is now, someone who has made many mistakes but wants to change her life for the better?

Chocolate for Breakfast starts as a simple adventure abroad and unfurls into a dramatic, heartwarming story which continues in the sequel, Chocolate Fondue. These books must be read together in order to experience and appreciate Bernie's drastic character development. Chocolate for Breakfast is the place to start to fully understand how the choices Bernie made in Fribourg sent her spiraling down the wrong path, but Chocolate Fondue is where the complexity and depth of Bernie's character truly come alive and the full breadth of Martha Reynolds' skill as a writer is on display. In the sequel, Martha does a remarkable job of weaving together two storylines and making the reader want to keep reading to find out how the stories will be resolved. A captivating story has a twist around every corner and keeps the reader wondering what will happen next, both of which Martha accomplishes with aplomb. I was hooked from beginning until the end and, who wouldn't be, when chocolate is involved.

Sue says

As she heads to Switzerland with her college friends for a year of study abroad, Bernadette Maguire is determined to change her status as a 20-year-old virgin. She succeeds with a handsome banker. Unfortunately, she also gets pregnant with his child. Turns out he's married, with no interest in Bernie except for a weekend of fun, but now she has a big problem. This is the story of her year in Switzerland, her travels, her friends, and her fears as she tries to hide her condition and do what is best for the baby. In the last part of the book, she is 23 years old, still dealing with the repercussions of that year. The book is so simplistic and predictable, I thought at first that I had accidentally downloaded a book written for teenagers, and I wish Reynolds had skipped the whole last part, but I was hooked from early on and downed it like Bernie's favorite Swiss chocolates.

Anna Marie says

Ah... now this was more the type of novel I can really sink my teeth into. A story of fears, dreams, expectations, heartbreak, regret, and restoration. Well written, fairly developed characters, realistically bad choices. This book was 'Chocolat' meets 'Circle of Friends', with its own special flavoring.

Bernadette spends a year studying college abroad in Switzerland. During that time she hopes to fall in love, experience life, see the world, and become richer for the time spent there. Instead, she finds herself pregnant, alone, afraid, and in need of more help and friendship than she came into her trip with.

I agree with other reviewers that there wasn't enough character development on some of the people introduced in the book, that there was too much drinking while pregnant for my tastes (although in Europe in the 70s I think people didn't have the same views as we do, now)... but I found the book captivating, regardless.

The only thing that kept me from giving it five stars was Chapter 36. I don't think they should've had a chapter 36. An epilogue with Timmy at the funeral and her trip with her aunt, yes, but not Chapter 36. But that's just me.

Brea Brown says

This book grabbed me from the start. I really loved the protagonist, even if at times I wanted to smack her around a little. She was realistically smart, funny, dense, and naive, and I could really relate to her. I have to say, though, the book wasn't exactly what I expected. What I thought was going to be a light, fluffy work of escapism was anything but. It was at times heart wrenching and poignant and deeply sad. I'm still thinking about it... in a good way. It was evocative and a worthwhile read. Thanks, Martha Reynolds!

Gayle Hayes says

I downloaded *Chocolate for Breakfast* after enjoying the topics and writing style in Martha Reynolds' blog. Although I enjoyed reading the novel, I had to set it aside for a few weeks. I reopened the novel at Chapter 7 to read outdoors before a promised heat wave. I was hooked. I reluctantly bookmarked the novel so I could go inside long enough to check on a pet and have a hurried lunch. I couldn't wait to keep reading, finishing the book by day's end.

As a writer myself, I am mystified by readers who need to like the protagonist and give a negative review if they do not. While I did not dislike Bernie, the main character of this novel, I did not identify with her quest to lose her virginity, either. However, she struck me as an intelligent but naïve young woman, and I certainly could identify with those traits. As I look back on my own life, I am surprised that I was at once so bright and yet so much in the dark about real life.

More important than liking Bernie is the fact that Martha Reynolds skillfully brought Bernie to life. I forgot I was reading fiction. It was as if I were reading a letter from Bernie about the intimate details of her year in Switzerland. I could easily visualize and hear the secondary characters of Lisa, Erika and Hanna, Mr. Gordon and Timmy, and Karl Berset. With the exception of Berset, I cared about all of them and admired the generosity of the women who supported Bernie during her ordeal. While another author might have created much conflict from Bernie's dilemma, I was glad Martha chose to be uplifting.

The ending of the novel was jarring. I had accepted Bernie as a good person who made a mistake. She did not blame anyone but herself, and she did not run from the consequences. I assumed she would return home, continue her education, marry, and lead a happy life. If the author would have continued the story and gradually revealed the long-term effect Karl Berset had on Bernie's life, I might have reacted differently. Instead, I was less sympathetic to Bernie in her forties than Bernie in her twenties, because I had no basis for understanding her choices. This is probably because most of the novel dealt with one year of Bernie's life. Suddenly, several years have passed, leaving Bernie almost unrecognizable. I needed to read the last few chapters again to reconcile my discomfort. The author's choice to end the novel as she did certainly left a powerful impression and made the point that cavalier choices we make in our youth can have negative, lifelong consequences.

This is an impressive debut novel. A common occurrence takes on heightened drama in a foreign land. The descriptions of life in Switzerland were vivid. Not having studied abroad, I was interested to know what it might have been like for others. The author manages to convey real characters and situations with an economy of language that is also easy and pleasant to read. I was easily transported to faraway places with no effort on my part. I recommend this book without reservation, and I look forward to Martha's *Chocolate Fondue*.

Paula Acton says

I will confess the first few pages put me off a little and I felt like I had picked up a young adult romance. But persevere past the opening chapter and you will find a wonderfully complex coming of age story. The characters are wonderfully written and realistic, and the plot is really a study into the errors of youth and the consequences of each decision a person makes. It is also a reminder that by holding back ones secrets more damage can be done than the truth could ever unleash. I really would recommend this book.
