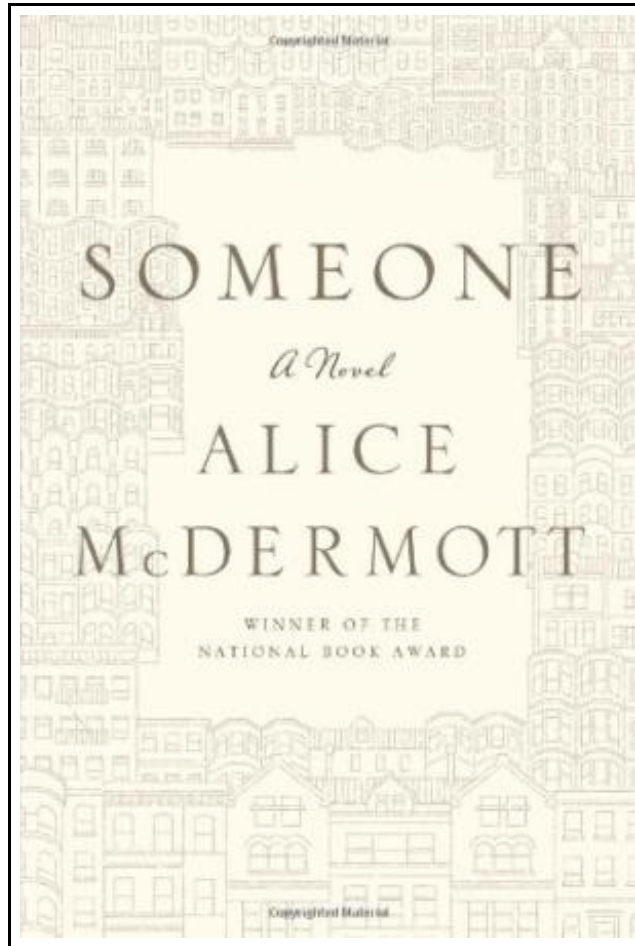


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Reviews

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FSG. 1 Cloth(s), 2013. hard. Book Condition: New. (Nominated for the 2013 National Book Award, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and a New York Times Notable Book of the Year) The author of the National Book Award and American Book Award winner *Charming Billy* as well as three Pulitzer Prize finalists *That Night*, *At Weddings and Wakes*, and *After This* Alice McDermott here gives us a portrait of a seemingly ordinary yet unforgettable woman. We first glimpse Marie Commeford as a child a girl of seven from Irish stock, observing her pre-Depression world through comically thick glasses, sitting on a Brooklyn stoop. Through her first heartbreak and her marriage, her career as a funeral director's "consoling angel," her brother's brief stint as a Catholic priest and his emotional breakdown, the deaths of her parents and the births of her children, we follow Marie through the rapidly changing 20th century."Here, in the most deceptively ordinary language, she evokes both the world of light and that of darkness. [The book] has something of the quality of a slide show . each slide, each scene, from the ostensibly inconsequential to the clearly momentous, is illuminated with equal care. The effect on the reader is of sitting alongside the narrator, sharing the task of sifting the salvaged fragments of her life, watching her puzzle over, rearrange and reconsider them and at last, but without any particular urgency or certitude, tilting herself in the direction of finally discerning their significance. This is a quiet business, but it's the sense-making we all engage in, the narrative work that allows us to construct a coherent framework for our everyday existence. It's also a serious business, the essential work of an examined life. McDermott's excellence is on ample display here."NYTBR 232.



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