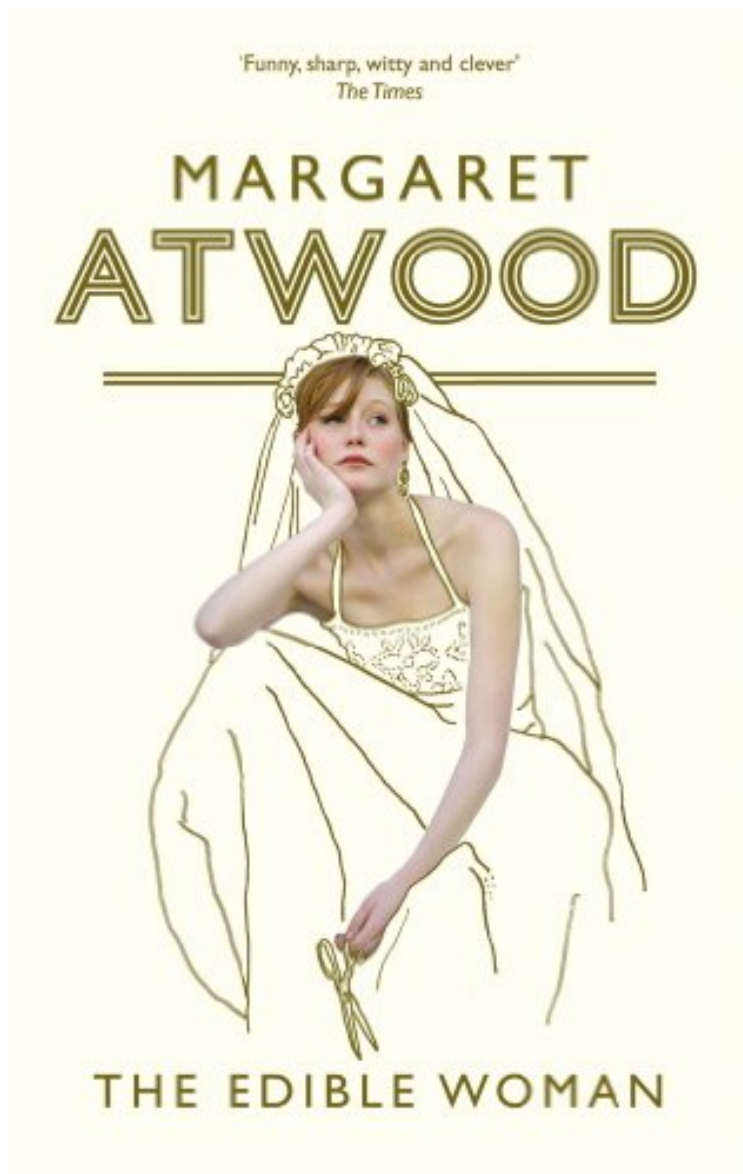


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# The Edible Woman (English Edition)



*Par Margaret Atwood*  
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Prsentation de l'diteurBy the author of The Handmaid's Tale and Alias Grace Marian is determined to be

ordinary. She lays her head gently on the shoulder of her serious fiancée and quietly awaits marriage. But she didn't count on an inner rebellion that would rock her stable routine, and her digestion. Marriage a la mode, Marian discovers, is something she literally can't stomach ... The Edible Woman is a funny, engaging novel about emotional cannibalism, men and women, and desire to be consumed.'Margaret Atwood not only has a sense of humour, she has wit and style in abundance ... a joy to read' Good Housekeeping'Written with a brilliant angry energy' Observer 'A witty, elegant, generous and patient writer' PunchExtrait'I know I was all right on Friday when I got up; if anything I was feeling more stolid than usual. When I went out to the kitchen to get breakfast Ainsley was there, moping: she said she had been to a bad party the night before. She swore there had been nothing but dentistry students, which depressed her so much she had consoled herself by getting drunk. You have no idea how soggy it is, she said, having to go through twenty conversations about the insides of peoples mouths. The most reaction I got out of them was when I described an abscess I once had. They positively drooled. And most men look at something besides your teeth, for gods sake. She had a hangover, which put me in a cheerful mood it made me feel so healthy and I poured her a glass of tomato juice and briskly fixed her an Alka- Seltzer, listening and making sympathetic noises while she complained. As if I didnt get enough of that at work, she said. Ainsley has a job as a tester of defective electric toothbrushes for an electric toothbrush company: a temporary job. What she is waiting for is an opening in one of those little art galleries, even though they dont pay well: she wants to meet the artists. Last year, she told me, it was actors, but then she actually met some. Its an absolute fixation. I expect they all carry those bent mirrors around in their coat pockets and peer into their own mouths every time they go to the john to make sure theyre still cavity- free. She ran one hand reflectively through her hair, which is long and red, or rather auburn. Could you imagine kissing one? Hed say Open wide beforehand. Theyre so bloody one- track. It must have been awful, I said, refilling her glass. Couldnt you have changed the topic? Ainsley raised her almost non- existent eyebrows, which hadnt been coloured in yet that morning. Of course not, she said. I pretended to be terribly interested. And naturally I didnt let on what my job was: those professional men get so huffy if you know anything about their subject. You know, like Peter. Ainsley tends to make jabs at Peter, especially when she isnt feeling well. I was magnanimous and didnt respond. Youd better eat something before you go to work, I said, its better when youve got something on your stomach. Oh god, said Ainsley, I cant face it. Another day of machines and mouths. I havent had an interesting one since last month, when that lady sent back her toothbrush because the bristles were falling off. We found out shed been using Ajax. I got so caught up in being efficient for Ainsleys benefit while complimenting myself on my moral superiority to her that I didnt realize how late it was until she reminded me. At the electric toothbrush company they dont care what time you breeze in, but my company thinks of itself as punctual. I had to skip the egg and wash down a glass of milk and a bowl of cold cereal which I knew would leave me hungry long before lunchtime. I chewed through a piece of bread while Ainsley watched me in nauseated silence and grabbed up my purse, leaving Ainsley to close the apartment door behind me. We live on the top floor of a large house in one of the older and more genteel districts, in what I suppose used to be the servants quarters. This means there are two flights of stairs between us and the front door, the higher flight narrow and slippery, the lower one wide and carpeted but with stair rods that come loose. In the high heels expected by the office I have to go down sideways, clutching the bannister. That morning I made it safely past the line of pioneer brass warming- pans strung on the wall of our stairway, avoided catching myself on the many- pronged spinning wheel on the second-floor landing, and sidestepped quickly down past the ragged regimental flag behind glass and the row of oval- framed ancestors that guard the first stairway. I was relieved to see there was no one in the downstairs hall. On level ground I strode towards the door, swerving to avoid the rubber plant on one side and the hall table with the cru doily and the round brass tray on the other. Behind the velvet curtain to the right I could hear the child performing her morning penance at the piano. I thought I was safe. But before I reached the door it swung silently inward upon its hinges, and I knew I was trapped. It was the lady down below. She was wearing a pair of spotless gardening gloves and carrying a trowel. I wondered who shed been burying in the garden. Good morning, Miss MacAlpin, she said. Good morning. I nodded and smiled. I can never remember her name, and neither can Ainsley; I suppose we have what they call a mental block about it. I looked past her towards the street, but she didnt move out of the doorway. I was out last night, she said. At a meeting. She has an indirect way of going about things. I shifted from one foot to the other and smiled again, hoping she would realize I was in a hurry. The child tells me there was another fire. Well, it wasnt exactly a fire, I said. The child had taken this mention of her name as an excuse to stop practising, and was standing now in the velvet doorway of the parlour, staring

at me. She is a hulking creature of fifteen or so who is being sent to an exclusive private girls school, and she has to wear a green tunic with knee-socks to match. Im sure shes really quite normal, but theres something cretinous about the hair- ribbon perched up on top of her gigantic body. The lady down below took off one of her gloves and patted her chignon. Ah, she said sweetly. The child says there was a lot of smoke. Everything was under control, I said, not smiling this time. It was just the pork chops. Oh, I see, she said. Well, I do wish you would tell Miss Tewce to try not to make quite so much smoke in future. Im afraid it upsets the child. She holds Ainsley alone responsible for the smoke, and seems to think she sends it out of her nostrils like a dragon. But she never stops Ainsley in the hall to talk about it: only me. I suspect shes decided Ainsley isnt respectable, whereas I am. Its probably the way we dress: Ainsley says I choose clothes as though theyre a camouflage or a protective colouration, though I cant see anything wrong with that. She herself goes in for neon pink. Of course I missed the bus: as I crossed the lawn I could see it disappearing across the bridge in a cloud of air pollution. While I was standing under the tree our street has many trees, all of them enormous waiting for the next bus, Ainsley came out of the house and joined me. Shes a quick- change artist; I could never put myself together in such a short time. She was looking a lot healthier possibly the effects of makeup, though you can never tell with Ainsley and she had her red hair piled up on top of her head, as she always does when she goes to work. The rest of the time she wears it down in straggles. She had on her orange and pink sleeveless dress, which I judged was too tight across the hips. The day was going to be hot and humid; already I could feel a private atmosphere condensing around me like a plastic bag. Maybe I should have worn a sleeveless dress too. She got me in the hall, I said. About the smoke. The old bitch, said Ainsley. Why cant she mind her own business? Ainsley doesnt come from a small town as I do, so shes not as used to people being snoopy; on the other hand shes not as afraid of it either. She has no idea about the consequences. Shes not that old, I said, glancing over at the curtained windows of the house; though I knew she couldnt hear us. Besides, it wasnt her who noticed the smoke, it was the child. She was at a meeting. Probably the W.C.T.U., Ainsley said. Or the I.O.D.E. Ill bet she wasnt at a meeting at all; she was hiding behind that damn velvet curtain, wanting us to think she was at a meeting so wed really do something. What she wants is an orgy. Now Ainsley, I said, youre being paranoid. Ainsley is convinced that the lady down below comes upstairs when we arent there and looks round our apartment and is silently horrified, and even suspects her of ruminating over our mail, though not of going so far as to open it. Its a fact that she sometimes answers the front door for our visitors before they ring the bell. She must think shes within her rights to take precautions: when we first considered renting the apartment she made it clear to us, by discreet allusions to previous tenants, that whatever happened the childs innocence must not be corrupted, and that two young ladies were surely more to be depended upon than two young men. Im doing my best, she had said, sighing and shaking her head. She had intimated that her husband, whose portrait in oils hung above the piano, had not left as much money as he should have. Of course you realize your apartment has no private entrance? She had been stressing the drawbacks rather than the advantages, almost as though she didnt want us to rent. I sa...Revue de presse Articulate and sophisticated. Extraordinarily witty, and full of ironic observation. A tour de force. Toronto Star [Atwood is] one of the most intelligent and talented writers to set herself the task of deciphering life in the late twentieth century. Vogue Remarkable. The Edible Woman assumes the force of a banal dream that has turned, without the dreamer quite noticing, into a nightmare. [It] conceals the kick of a perfume bottle converted into a Molotov cocktail. Time Delightful spare, precise, mordantly witty. Exquisitely written. Journal of Canadian Fiction [The Edible Woman] is chock-full of startling images, superbly and classically crafted. Saturday Night Few writers are able to combine wit and humour. Margaret Atwood is a poet and novelist who seems to be able to do anything she wants. Newsweek A pleasure. Kirkus s Funny, sharp, witty, clever. The Times (U.K.) Marked by a keen eye for evocative details which cohere into vivid incidents. Canadian Forum [Atwood is] a subtle and penetrating observer of relationships between men and women. Sunday Times (U.K.) Reflections on marriage, guilt and the relationship between the sexes classic Atwood territory. The Guardian (U.K.) [Atwood] knows exactly what she is doing with every phrase. Vancouver Sun