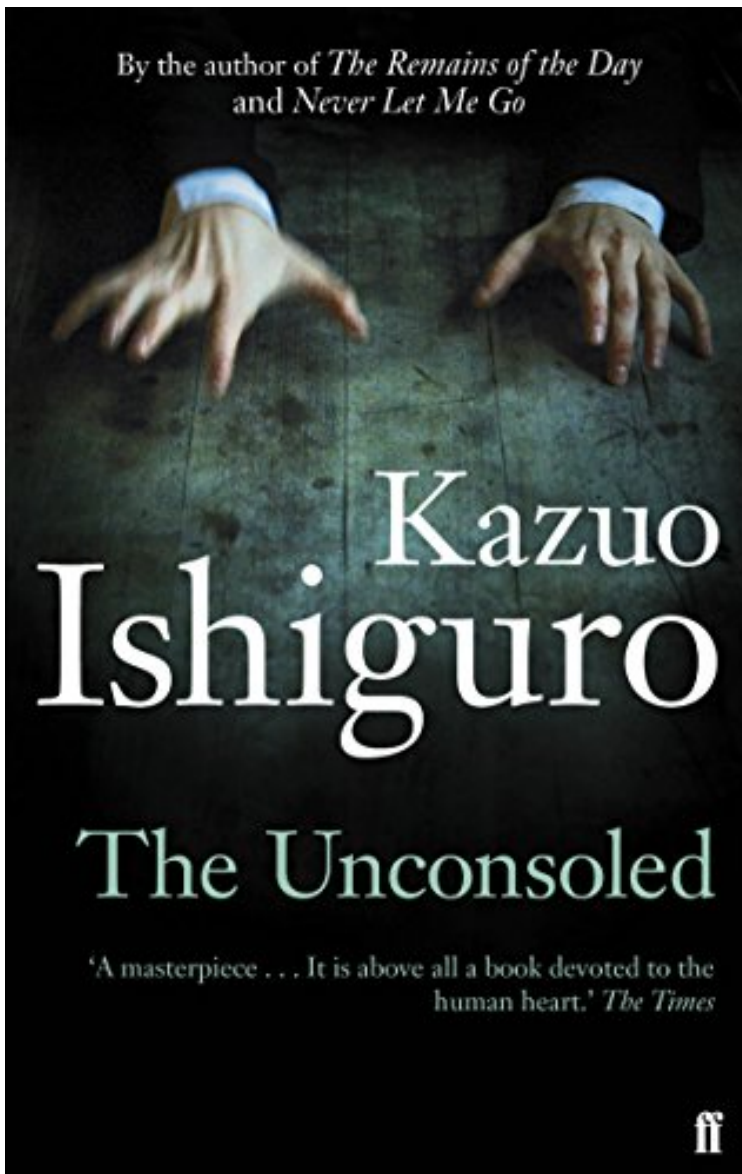


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# The Unconsoled (English Edition)



Par Kazuo Ishiguro  
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Par Kazuo Ishiguro : The Unconsoled (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Unconsoled (English Edition):

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**Description :** Description du produitFrom the universally acclaimed author of *The Remains of the Day* comes a mesmerizing novel of completely unexpected mood and matter--a seamless, fictional universe, both wholly unrecognizable and familiar. When the public, day-to-day reality of a renowned pianist takes on a life of its own, he finds himself traversing landscapes that are by turns eerie, comical, and strangely malleable.

Prsentation de l'diteur'Almost certainly a masterpiece.' Anita BrooknerRyder, a renowned pianist, arrives in a Central European city he cannot identify for a concert he cannot remember agreeing to give. But then as he traverses a landscape by turns eerie and comical - and always strangely malleable, as a dream might be - he comes steadily to realise he is facing the most crucial performance of his life.Ishiguro's extraordinary and

original study of a man whose life has accelerated beyond his control was met on publication by consternation, vilification - and the highest praise. If you enjoyed *The Unconsoled*, you might also like Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, now available in Faber Modern Classics.

Extrait | The taxi driver seemed embarrassed to find there was no one - not even a clerk behind the reception desk - waiting to welcome me. He wandered across the deserted lobby, perhaps hoping to discover a staff member concealed behind one of the plants or armchairs. Eventually he put my suitcases down beside the elevator doors and, mumbling some excuse, took his leave of me. The lobby was reasonably spacious, allowing several coffee tables to be spread around it with no sense of crowding. But the ceiling was low and had a definite sag, creating a slightly claustrophobic mood, and despite the sunshine outside the light was gloomy. Only near the reception desk was there a bright streak of sun on the wall, illuminating an area of dark wood panelling and a rack of magazines in German, French and English. I could see also a small silver bell on the reception desk and was about to go over to shake it when a door opened somewhere behind me and a young man in uniform appeared. 'Good afternoon, sir,' he said tiredly and, going behind the reception desk, began the registration procedures. Although he did mumble an apology for his absence, his manner remained for a time distinctly off-hand. As soon as I mentioned my name, however, he gave a start and straightened himself. 'Mr Ryder, I'm so sorry I didn't recognise you. Mr Hoffman, the manager, he was very much wanting to welcome you personally. But just now, unfortunately, he's had to go to an important meeting.' 'That's perfectly all right. I'll look forward to meeting him later on.' The desk clerk hurried on through the registration forms, all the while muttering about how annoyed the manager would be to have missed my arrival. He twice mentioned how the preparations for 'Thursday night' were putting the latter under unusual pressure, keeping him away from the hotel far more than was usual. I simply nodded, unable to summon the energy to enquire into the precise nature of 'Thursday night'. 'Oh, and Mr Brodsky's been doing splendidly today,' the desk clerk said, brightening. 'Really splendidly. This morning he rehearsed that orchestra for four hours non-stop. And listen to him now! Still hard at it, working things out by himself.' He indicated the rear of the lobby. Only then did I become aware that a piano was being played somewhere in the building, just audible above the muffled noise of the traffic outside. I raised my head and listened more closely. Someone was playing a single short phrase - it was from the second movement of Mullery's *Verticality* - over and over in a slow, preoccupied manner. 'Of course, if the manager were here,' the desk clerk was saying, 'he might well have brought Mr Brodsky out to meet you. But I'm not sure . . .' He gave a laugh. 'I'm not sure if I should disturb him. You see, if he's deep in concentration . . .' 'Of course, of course. Another time.' 'If the manager were here . . .' He trailed off and laughed again. Then leaning forward, he said in a low voice: 'Do you know, sir, some guests have had the nerve to complain? About our closing off the drawing room like this each time Mr Brodsky requires the piano? It's amazing how some people think! Two different guests actually complained to Mr Hoffman yesterday. You can be sure, they were very quickly put in their place.' 'I'm sure they were. Brodsky, you say.' I thought about the name, but it meant nothing to me. Then I caught the desk clerk watching me with a puzzled look and said quickly: 'Yes, yes. I'll look forward to meeting Mr Brodsky in good time.' 'If only the manager were here, sir.' 'Please don't worry. Now if that's all, I'd very much appreciate . . .' 'Of course, sir. You must be very tired after such a long journey. Here's your key. Gustav over there will show you to your room.' I looked behind me and saw that an elderly porter was waiting across the lobby. He was standing in front of the open elevator, staring into its interior with a preoccupied air. He gave a start as I came walking up to him. He then picked up my suitcases and hurried into the elevator after me. As we began our ascent, the elderly porter continued to hold on to both suitcases and I could see him growing red with the effort. The cases were both very heavy and a serious concern that he might pass out before me led me to say: 'You know, you really ought to put those down.' 'I'm glad you mention it, sir,' he said, and his voice betrayed surprisingly little of the physical effort he was expending. 'When I first started in this profession, very many years ago now, I used to place the bags on the floor. Pick them up only when I absolutely needed to. When in motion, so to speak. In fact, for the first fifteen years of working here, I have to say I used that method. It's one that many of the younger porters in this town still employ. But you won't find me doing anything of that sort now. Besides, sir, we're not going up far.' We continued our ascent in silence. Then I said: 'So you've worked in this hotel for some time.' 'Twenty-seven years now, sir. I've seen plenty here in that time. But of course, this hotel was standing long before I ever got here. Frederick the Great is believed to have stayed a night here in the eighteenth century, and by all accounts it was a long-established inn even then. Oh yes, there have been events here of great historic interest over the years. Some time when you're not so tired, sir, I'd be happy to relate a few of these things to you.' 'But you were telling me,' I said, 'why you

consider it a mistake to place luggage on the floor."Ah yes,' the porter said. 'Now that's an interesting point. You see, sir, as you can imagine, in a town of this sort, there are many hotels. This means that many people in this town have at some point or other tried their hand at portering. Many people here seem to think they can simply put on a uniform and then that will be it, they'll be able to do the job. It's a delusion that's been particularly nurtured in this town. Call it a local myth, if you will. And I'll readily confess, there was a time when I unthinkingly subscribed to it myself. Then once-oh, it was many years ago now-my wife and I took a short holiday We went to Switzerland, to Lucerne. My wife has passed away now, sir, but whenever I think of her I remember our short holiday. It's very beautiful there by the lake. No doubt you know it. We took some lovely boat rides after breakfast. Well, to return to my point, during that holiday I observed that people in that town didn't make the same sorts of assumptions about their porters as people here do. How can I put it, sir? There was much greater respect paid to porters there. The best ones were figures of some renown and had the leading hotels fighting for their services. I must say it opened my eyes. But in this town, well, there's been this idea for many many years. In fact there are days when I wonder if it can ever be eradicated. Now I'm not saying people here are in any way rude to us. Far from it, I've always been treated with politeness and consideration here. But, you see, sir, there's always this idea that anyone could do this job if they took it into their heads, if the fancy just took them. I suppose it's because everyone in this town at some point has had the experience of carrying luggage from place to place. Because they've done that, they assume being a hotel porter is just an extension of it. I've had people over the years, sir, in this very elevator, who've said to me: "I might give up what I'm doing one of these days and take up portering." Oh yes. Well, sir, one day-it wasn't long after our short holiday in Lucerne-I had one of our leading city councillors say more or less those exact words to me. "I'd like to do that one of these days," he said to me, indicating the bags. "That's the life for me. Not a care in the world." I suppose he was trying to be kind, sir. Implying I was to be envied.

That was when I was younger, sir, I didn't then hold the bags, I had them on the floor, here in this very elevator, and I suppose in those days I might have looked a bit that way. You know, carefree, as the gentleman implied. Well, I tell you, sir, that was the last straw. I don't mean the gentleman's words made me so angry in themselves. But when he said that to me, well, things sort of fell into place. Things I'd been thinking about for some time. And as I explained to you, sir, I was fresh from our short holiday in Lucerne where I'd got some perspective. And I thought to myself, well, it's high time porters in this town set about changing the attitude prevalent here. You see, sir, I'd seen something different in Lucerne, and I felt, well, it really wasn't good enough, what went on here. So I thought hard about it and decided on a number of measures I would personally take. Of course, even then, I probably knew how difficult it would be. I think I may have realised all those years ago that it was perhaps already too late for my own generation. That things had gone too far. But I thought, well, even if I could do my part and change things just a little, it would at least make it easier for those who came after me. So I adopted my measures, sir, and I've stuck to them, ever since that day the city councillor said what he did. And I'm proud to say a number of other porters in this town followed my lead. That's not to say they adopted precisely the same measures I did. But let's say their measures were, well, compatible."I see. And one of your measures was not to put down the suitcases but to continue to hold them."Exactly, sir, you've followed my gist very well. Of course, I have to say, when I took on these rules for myself, I was much younger and stronger, and I suppose I didn't really calculate for my growing weaker with age. It's funny, sir, but you don't. The other porters have said similar things. All the same, we all try to keep to our old resolutions. We've become a pretty close-knit group over the years, twelve of us, we're what's left of the ones who tried to change ...

From Publishers Weekly

With this stunning new novel, cast in the form of a postmodern nightmare, Ishiguro tells a powerful story in which he once again exploits a narrator's utter lack of self-knowledge to create a devastating deadpan irony. A celebrated concert pianist identified only as Mr Ryder arrives at an unnamed European (seemingly Germanic) city not only to give a concert but also, it seems, to address the townspeople and help them surmount a communal sense of crisis that stems from the city's inability to nurture a musical artist of outstanding creative talent. Strangely, the economic, social and psychic health of the community depends on its regaining its self-image in the wake of a dreadful past mistake, when the city fathers lionized a musician with the "wrong" artistic values. Ryder intuitively grasps this situation gradually, for he is curiously disoriented; he can't really remember what he's supposed to be doing there. In fact, through Ryder's confused perceptions, the reader is immediately plunged into a surrealistic landscape that has the eerie unpredictability, claustrophobic atmosphere and strange time sequences of a dream. Everyone in this town presents a false image to the world. Each person Ryder meets addresses him with fawning obsequiousness and asks him for a small favor which turns out to

be an egregious intrusion into his time. Yet Ryder, infused with an inflated sense of mission, feels a need to console them: "People need me. I arrive in a place and find terrible problems, and people are so grateful I've come." Although he initially thinks he's a stranger in the city, it slowly becomes obvious that he's been here before. In fact, he has been the lover of a woman called Sophie whose little boy, Boris, in many ways replays the pivotal events of Ryder's own life. With dream logic, many of Ryder's childhood friends from England turn up in this inhospitable place, and it becomes obvious that most events are replicas of ones that have occurred before or that fulfill Ryder's fears about the future. As in Ishiguro's previous books (*The Remains of the Day*, etc.), almost every turn of the plot concerns a failure of communication and a stifling of emotional responses. Children are profoundly wounded by their self-absorbed and insensitive parents; lovers alienate each other across an emotional abyss. The culture-obsessed inhabitants of the city don't recognize true talent when it appears; they disapprove of creativity when it doesn't fit their expectations. Sustaining the nightmarish atmosphere of this tale—its tone alternately sinister and farcical—for more than 500 pages is a tricky business, especially since all the characters express themselves in long, dense monologues. Yet, so adroit is Ishiguro in maintaining suspense that one is as ensnared in the nightmare as is Ryder. The story seems to be a journey through life: its purpose never entirely clear, its events capricious and inexplicable, its destination undoubtedly "the vast, dark, empty space" of the soul's extinction. 75,000 first printing; BOMC and QPB selections. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.