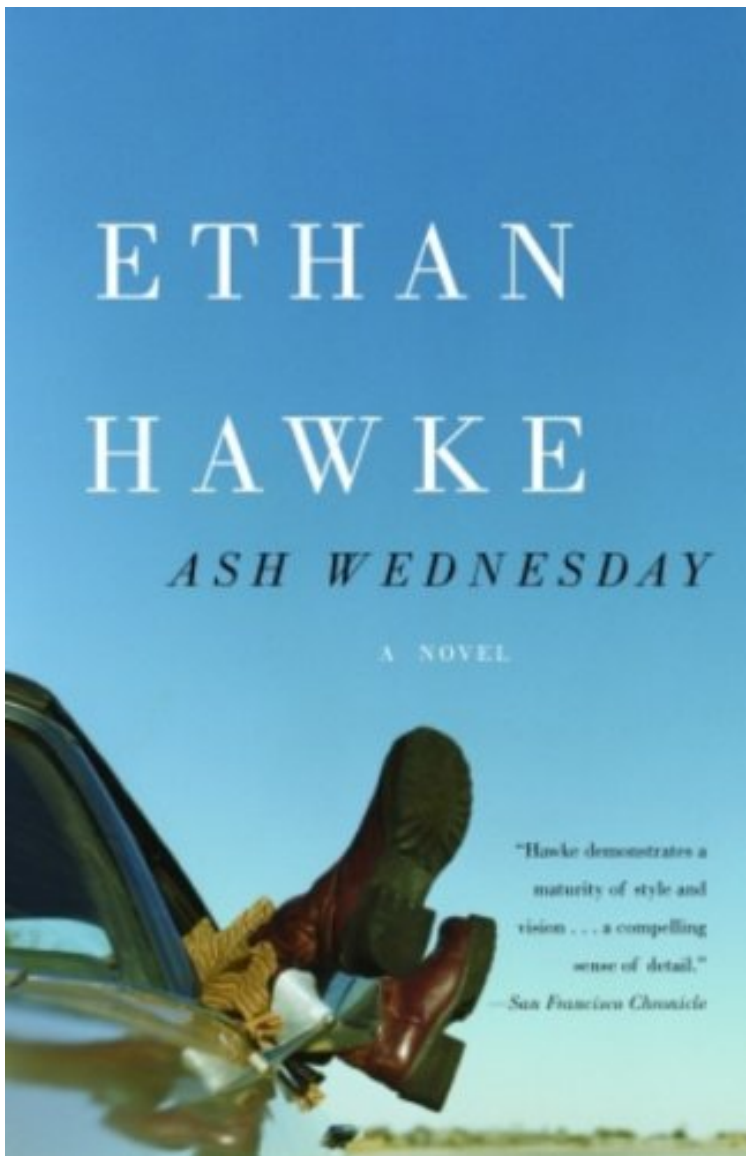


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Ash Wednesday



Par Ethan Hawke
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurFrom the actor, director, and writer Ethan Hawke: a piercing novel of love, marriage, and renewal.Jimmy is AWOL from the army, butwith characteristic fierceness and terrorhes about to embark on the biggest commitment of his life. Christy is pregnant with Jimmys child, and shes determined to head home, with or without Jimmy, to face up to her past and prepare for the future. Somehow, barreling across America from Albany to New Orleans to Ohio and Texas in a souped-up Chevy Nova, Christy and Jimmy are transformed from passionate but conflicted lovers into a young family on a magnificent journey.Ash

Wednesday is a novel of blazing emotion and remarkable grace, a tale that captures the intensitythe excitement, fear, and joyof being on the threshold of the mysterious country of marriage and parenthood.

Powerful, assured, large of heart, and punctuated by moments of tremendous humor, it represents, for Hawke the novelist, a major leap forward. From the Trade Paperback edition.

Extrait

Introducing James Heartsock

I was driving a '69 Chevy Nova 370 four-barrel with mag wheels and a dual exhaust. It's a kick-ass car. I took the muffler out so it sounds like a Harley. People love it. I was staring at myself through the window into the driver's-side-mirror; I do that all the time. I'll stare into anything that reflects. That's not a flattering quality, and I wish I didn't do it, but I do. I'm vain as all hell. It's revolting. Most of the time when I'm looking in the mirror, I'm checking to see if I'm still here or else I'm wishing I was somebody else, a Mexican bandito or somebody like that. I have a mustache. Most guys with mustaches look like fags, but I don't. I touch mine too much, though. I touch it all the time. I don't even know why I'm telling you about it now. I just stare at myself constantly and I wish I didn't. It brings me absolutely no pleasure at all. My fingers were frozen around the steering wheel. Albany in February is a black sooty slab of ice. The woman on the radio announced the time and temperature: eight-forty-two and twenty-three degrees. Christy and I had broken up fifteen hours earlier, and I was in a tailspin. I had my uniform on, the dress one; it's awesome. Military uniforms make you feel like somebody, like you have a purpose, even if you don't. You feel special, connected to the past. You're not just an ordinary person, a civilian you're noble. The downside of this Walk of Pride is, it's a lie. This is my story. My orders were unbelievable, my lieutenant is an out-of-control high-speed prick. This was his job. I had to inform some dude's wife that her husband had been shot in the head. The soldier's name was Private Kevin Anderson, and he'd been killed outside of Paradise the night before. Paradise is a bar where all the black dudes hang: probably drugs or some kind of bullshit high jinks. I didn't know him at all. Not to mention, I was all cracked up myself. I hadn't been to sleep, doing speed all night: crystal meth. Breaking up with Christy had been a giant mistake; I knew it the minute I walked away. The army is more lamebrain than you can even imagine. My lieutenant sometimes has me and my men go into town and stand guard over parking spots: securing position. I joined up because I wanted to be of service to something. I'd tried college, Kent State, for two years but screw that. Who wants to pay all that coin just to drink beer and get VD? My dad had been in the army, and I grew up constantly drawing pictures of machine guns and soldiers killing the hell out of one another othershit like that so I thought joining the army made sense. I figured it was my destiny, and it was, but just because something's your destiny doesn't mean it's gonna be any good. I thought maybe someday I'd be in a Dairy Queen and some bonzo lunatic would whip out an automatic and start wasting people, and I'd be the one guy there who'd be able to stop him, who'd show some signs of personal heroism or integrity. There are a lot of people in the world. It's difficult to find a way to set yourself apart. When I was twelve, I built a working crossbow with bolts I could sink into a tree. That's about the coolest thing I've ever done. Now, the only thing interesting or worthy of remark about me was my car. It was tits: silver with bold black racing stripes straight down the center. I never had any trouble getting laid. I was hauling ass through north Albany into the "darker" part of town looking for this Anderson kid's address: 23761/2 Hawthorne, apartment B. I had all his information in a folder on the passenger seat. The streets were icy and lined with piles of crusty pollution-stained snow. I found the house easy, a big old place divided up into eight apartments. All the homes on the block were done the exact same way. Once upon a time this was the swank part of town about eighty trillion years ago. I sat in my Nova under a tremendous barren old sycamore tree that grew adjacent to the Andersons' driveway. Trees are wonderful. My dad was a tree man. He planted and trimmed trees for a living. Sometimes he'd be 180 feet up in the air rappelling around with a spinning chain saw, dead and sick branches bombing down onto the ground. I loved my dad. If I could give you the sensation of being eight years old watching him up in some magnificent maple singing to himself and talking to the branches if you could hear him yell down, "Jimmy, when you're thirteen and you come live with me, we'll have ourselves some laughs then, pal, you can bet your sweet ass on that!" if you could be inside my guts for that moment, you'd know exactly what it is like to be me.

Summers, growing up, I worked with the ground crews, chopping and clearing. I was Mr. Know-It-All about landscaping. This sycamore in front of me was close to two hundred years old. Unless some ding-a-ling cuts it down it'll be right there on Hawthorne Drive long after I'm dead. Can't tell you why, but that makes me feel good. I checked my nose to make sure it wasn't bleeding. Four hours before, I'd blown my last line with Tony, Eric, and Ed. Ed brought the crank. I wasn't gonna do any, but they started chopping 'em down, and like I said I'd just broken up with Christy and bada-bing bada-bam next thing you know I've been talking about Patrick Ewing, John Starks, and the rest of the New York Knicks for nine hours. Tony, Eric, and Ed are a bunch of numb-nuts, but I hang out with them all the time anyway. It makes me sad to think I'm like them. "Better to be alone than to wish you were." My father used to say that, but I never listen to anybody. I

don't say that with any pride. It's good to listen to people. In no way did I want to get out of the car. My lieutenant is a motherfucker. When I think about him, my body palpitates with rage. Only eight-thirty in the morning and already things were going terribly. THE ARMY. WE DO MORE BEFORE NINE O'CLOCK.

Isn't that the ad line on TV ?I'd always considered the military, but that movie Top Gun put me over the edge. Tom Cruise on that Nija, banging that girl. Fuckin'-A. That was me. Sounds idiotic, and I'm savvy to that now, but walking out of the dark theater into the mall parking lot, the blazin'-hot August sun screaming down, I felt that film move me like a calling from God. Needless to say, I'm not among any elite faggy batch of specialized pilots. Drugs were by far the most invigorating thing in my life. At first, I had aspirations. I wanted to go into Special Forces, Airborne Rangers, eventually maybe the FBI. Now my confidence was broken. Christy had been responsible for all the best elements of my life. I missed her. I wished I'd never met her. I wanted to die, so the unavailability of my disappointing her would be avoided. "You're leaving me, aren't you?" Christy had asked. She worked in the hospital, and we were on the seventh floor sitting in the cafeteria breaking up, both of us dressed in our uniforms. She was in her usual hospital garb, a blue skirt and blue blouse with her Social Services ID badge pinned to her chest, and I was in my normal office greens.

Her tall lanky body was awkward in the small red metal chair, her skin was translucent, and her big apprehensive gray eyes were trapped underneath tortoiseshell oval glasses. God, I didn't want to hurt her. "Come on, Jimmy, you're leaving me, aren't you?" she asked again. "Yes," I said. "You make me sick," she whispered. "People have always told me about this feeling, but I've never had it. It's awful." She spoke with empty eyes, as if it were already two years later. We'd been going together for about eighteen months, and I don't know why but she loved the holy hell out of me. "When you go back to your pea-brained friends and tell them how you've left me and how unstable I am, and they tell you what a psycho bitch I am and all that garbage, just remember that all they are is glad you're back drinking beer with them. They don't know you. They don't give a shit about you. And I do. I love you with my whole soul best, and if somebody else ever loves you as good as me, please remember there's nothing you have to do, just let them." She choked out a short laugh. "You're my greatest disappointment." She didn't kiss me good-bye, she just gave me another empty half-cocked smile, turned, and walked down the hall, her black leather shoes clacking on the shiny hospital floor. A family was coming out of one of the neighboring houses and strolling onto Hawthorne

Drive all dressed up in suits, dresses, and matching cute little outfits. They were heading off to church looking genuinely happy. I liked them. It's easy to like strangers, but difficult to like people you know well. I was sure I'd like the Andersons. Jesus, I didn't want Kevin to be dead. Iowa University, my lieutenant went to Iowa University, that's all. Anybody can go to Iowa University. This was his job. In one quick motion, I got out of my car and shut the door. I could hear how cold it was by the way the metal snapped shut. My body felt delicate, like if my fingers touched anything too hard, my whole hand might shatter. My head felt like a tarantula was gonna crawl out my nose. Things appear differently to me when I'm coming down off of drugs, like the kids climbing on trees are connected to the branches, and the tree is connected to the blowing breeze,

and the breeze is connected back to me. If someone asks me if I believe in God, I shake my head like I couldn't give a shit, but the truth is, I do. I just don't know what to do about it. The Andersons' front yard looked like a frozen-over version of Satan's lair. There were places the snow had melted and then frozen again in thin waves of ice. Weeds were poking their way through the ice out into the air. I could hear Ed's obnoxious laugh mocking me like a skipping CD inside my brain. What a moron. Walking up the d...Revue de presse Hawke demonstrates a maturity of style and vision [and] a compelling sense of detail. San

Francisco Chronicle Hawke's witty narrative . . . presents us with a pair of lively and surprisingly earnest pilgrims. The New York Times Book Succeeds because of a kind of rolling exuberance of style that carries one along a narrative freeway with no exits. Once you're on, you're on. Larry McMurtry [Hawke] displays a novelist's innate gifts. He has a sharp eye, a fluid storytelling voice and the imagination to create complicated individuals. The New York Times Ethan Hawke is a gifted novelist. This, his second novel, follows the intense romance and marriage of two smart, feeling, articulate young lovers. The Boston Globe Hawke not only does the basics well, with deft physical descriptions and sharp dialogue, but has an eye for weird,

surrealistic situations with a kernel of poetic seriousness. . . . A marvelous novel. London Daily Telegraph Employing his ear for dialogue as a rudder and his insight into character as a turbo, Ethan Hawke skillfully navigates the roiling waters of the twentysomething heart. Tom Robbins An ambitious road novel. Newsday Hawke, at times, achieves pure poetry. Time Out New York Unfolds pretty much the way a book should, tracing a herky-jerk romance from Albany, New York, to New Orleans and Texas in a bizarrely mature narrative straight, unapologetic, even funny. Esquire A fast-paced story laced with thoughtful

meditations on such thorny issues as spirituality, self-acceptance, and what makes love last. Austin American Statesman[Hawkes] got a focused, observant eye for realism and an attuned ear for language. . . . [He] is growing as an author, transforming himself into a novelist of interest. The Toronto GlobePassionate, spiritual, and ambitious. GlamourHawke has become a novelist. . . . Ash Wednesday is the work of a real writer. The Boston PhoenixA provocative, sensual meditation on faith and marriage think Denis Johnson by way of Sam Shepard. Pages