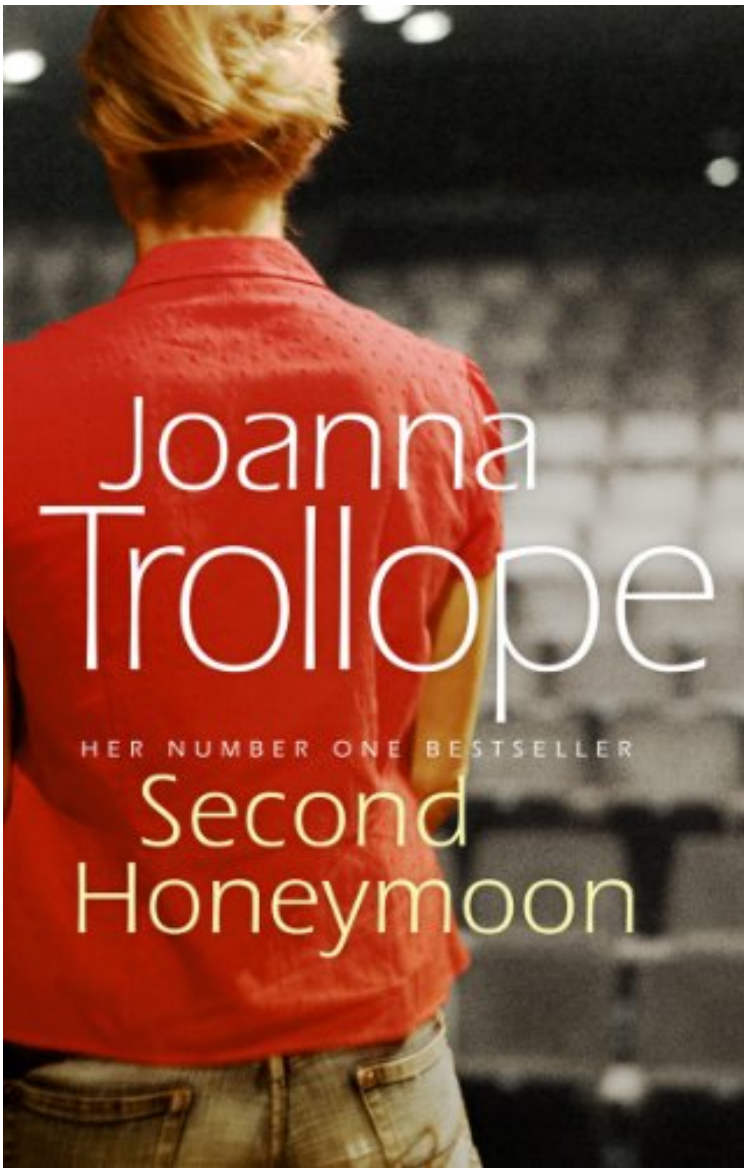


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# Second Honeymoon



*Par Joanna Trollope*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurBen is, at last, leaving home. At twenty-two, he's the youngest of the family. His mother, Edie, an actress, is distraught. His father, Russell, a theatrical agent, is rather hoping to get his wife back. His brother, Matthew, is struggling in a relationship in which he achieves and earns less than his girlfriend. And his sister, Rosa, is wrestling with debt and the end of a turbulent love affair.Meet the Boyd family and the empty nest, twenty-first-century style.ExtraitChapter OneEdie put her hand out, took a breath and slowly, slowly pushed open his bedroom door. The room inside looked as if he had never left it. The bed was unmade, the curtains half drawn, the carpet almost invisible under trails of clothing. There were single trainers on shelves, mugs and cereal bowls on the floor, scatterings of papers and books everywhere. On the

walls the same posters hung haphazardly from nuggets of blue gum: a Shakespeare play from a long-ago school outing, Kate Moss in a mackintosh, the Stereophonics from a concert at Earls Court. It looked, at first glance, as it had looked for a large part of his twenty-two years. It looked as if he was coming back, any minute. Edie stepped through the chaos on the floor ah, thats where her only bone-china mug had got to and pulled the curtains fully apart. One side, obviously accustomed to doing this, rushed headlong to the left and slid triumphantly off the pole to the floor. Edie looked up. The finial that stopped the end was missing. It had probably been missing for months, years, and Bens solution had been simply, pragmatically really, not to touch the curtain. In fact, on reflection, he would have had to thread the curtain back on to the pole just once, when the finial first fell off, and this small sign of enterprise and efficiency on his part made Edie think that she might cry. She picked up the fallen curtain and held it hard against her, swallowing against the crying. He hasnt gone to Mongolia, Russell had almost shouted at her that morning. He hasnt died. Hes gone to Walthamstow. Edie had said nothing. She had gone on jabbing at a hermetically sealed packet of coffee with the wrong kind of knife and said nothing. End of a tube line, Russell said unnecessarily. Thats all. Walthamstow. Edie flung the coffee and the knife into the sink. She would not look at Russell, she would not speak. She hated him when he was like this, when he knew perfectly well what was the matter and refused to admit it. She didnt hate his attitude, she told herself: she hated him. Sorry, Russell said. Edie pulled the curtain up now and covered her face with it. It smelled of dust, years and years of grimy London dust, silting in through the window frames like the fine tilth from a tea bag. She hadnt acknowledged Russells Sorry. She hadnt looked at him. She had remained silent, distanced by emotion, until she heard him go out of the room and down the hallway fumble, fumble by the coat rack and out through the front door, letting it crash behind him the way they all had, two parents, three children, for close on twenty years. Twenty years. Almost all Bens lifetime, almost a third of hers. You come to a house, Edie thought, pressing the dusty curtain against her eye sockets, carrying almost more life, more people, than you can manage. And then, over time, almost everything you have carried in begins to leak out again, inexorably, and you are left clutching fallen curtains at ten oclock on a Saturday morning instead of applying yourself, with all your new reserves of no longer required maternal energy, to quality leisure. She dropped the curtain back on to the floor. If she turned, slowly, and half closed her eyes, she could persuade herself that Ben had left his room in a mess as a signal to her that he hadnt really left it. That this notion of his to put all the essentials of his life into a duffel bag and carry it off to live with Naomi, in a spare room in her mothers flat in Walthamstow, was in truth no more than a notion. That he would begin to miss things, his childhood home, the cat, his pillow, his mother, and would see that life was not to be lived so satisfactorily anywhere else. But if she made herself open her eyes wide, really wide, and looked at the calibre of things he had left, the outgrown garments, the broken shoes, the discarded or irrelevant books and discs and papers, she could see that what Ben had left behind was what he didnt want any more. He had taken what represented the present and the future, and he had left the past, leaving it in such a way as to emphasise its irrelevance to him. Edie bent down and began, without method or enthusiasm, to pick up the cereal bowls. It wasnt as if Ben had ever, really, been away from home. His school days had melted comfortably into his college days and then into irregular, haphazard days of assistant to a self-employed photographer who specialised in portraits. All through these years Ben had come home, more nights than not, to sleep in the bedroom across the landing from his parents bedroom, which had been allotted to him when he was two. His bedroom had been by turns pale yellow, purple, papered with aeroplanes, and almost black. The detritus of his life, from Thomas the Tank Engine to trailing computer cables, had spilled out of his room and across the landing, symbols of his changing taste, his changing world.

The thought of the order no, not order, the absence of chaos that might follow his departure for Walthamstow brought Edie close to panic. It was like like having an artery shut off, a light extinguished. It was far, far worse than when Matt had gone. Or Rosa. It was far, far worse than she expected. She began to pile mugs and bowls without method on Bens table. He had done homework at that table, made models, hacked with blades at the edges. She sat down by it, on the chair with the broken cane seat, filled in by a gaudy Indian cushion embroidered with mirrors. She looked at the mess on the table. Ben was her youngest, her last. When the others went, she had felt a pang, but there had always been Ben, there had always been the untidy, demanding, gratifying, living proof that she was doing what she was meant to do, that she was doing something no one else could do. And, if Ben wasnt there to confirm her proper perception of herself in that way, what was she going to do about the future? What was she going to do about herself? Its awful, her sister, Vivien, had said on the telephone. Its just awful. You spend all these years and years developing this great supporting muscle for your children and then they just whip round, dont they, and hack it through.

Shed paused, and then shed said, in a cooler tone, Actually, its not so bad for you because youve always got the theatre.I havent, Edie said, IWell, I know you arent working at this precise moment. But you always could be, couldnt you? Youre always going for auditions and things.That, Edie said, her voice rising, has nothing to do with Ben going, nothing to do with motherhood.There was another pause and then Vivien said, in the slightly victim voice Edie had known since their childhoods, Eliots gone too, Edie. And hes my only child. Hes all Ive got.Eliot had gone to Australia. He had found a job on a local radio station in Cairns, and within six months had a flat and a girlfriend there. Ben had gone five stops up the Victoria line to Walthamstow.OK, Edie said to Vivien, conceding.I do knowYes.Lovely, Vivien said, for Russell.Mmm.Having you backEdie felt a flash of temper. Eliots father, Max, had drifted in and out of his wife and sons life in a way that made sure that the only thing about him that was predictable was his unreliability. Vivien might be able to trump her over the pain caused by distances, but she wasnt going to trump her over the pain caused by husbands.Enough, Edie said, and put the telephone down.Enough, she said to herself now, her elbows on Bens table. She twisted round. Against the wall, Bens bed stood exactly as he had left it, the duvet slewed towards the floor, the pillow dented, a magazine here, a pair of underpants there. It was tempting, she thought, holding hard to the chairback as an anchor, to spring up and fling herself down on Bens bed and push her face into his pillow and breathe and breathe. It was very tempting.Downstairs the front door crashed again. She heard Russells feet on the tiles of the hall, heard him say something companionable to the cat.Edie?She went on staring at Bens pillows.Ive got the newspapers, Russell called. An orgy of themEdie looked up at Bens bookshelves, at the space at the end where his teddy bear always sat, wearing Russells old school tie from over forty years ago. The bear had gone. She stood up, holding an awkward stack of crockery.Coming, she said.\* \* \*The garden was one of the reasons they had bought the house twenty years ago. It was only the width of the house, but it was seventy-five feet long, long enough for Matt, then eight, to kick a ball in. It also had a shed. Russell had loved the idea of a shed, the idea of paraffin heaters and fingerless gloves and listening to the football results on an old battery-operated radio. He saw seclusion in that shed, somewhere set apart from his family life and his working life because both were, by their very nature, all talk. He had a vision of being in the shed on winter weekend afternoons, probably wra...From Publishers WeeklyOver 16 novels, Trollope has explored a plethora of the modern family's permutations; her 17th is a tender, funny ode to empty nest syndrome. Edie Boyd is a middle-aged, part-time actress and London mother of three whose youngest is packing up and moving out. Husband Russell is delighted with the chance to rediscover and retune their marriage, but Edie can't quite face life (or herself) without being "Mum" on a daily basis. Not to worry: the children almost simultaneously fall prey to a series of mishaps and financial troubles, and Edie is delighted when her wish to have her brood back is suddenly granted. At this point, the transformations one expects in a flown coop begin to take hold, as does the comedy. Embedded in the novel's sometimes soap opera turns, which cut expertly from the children's points of view to Edie's, are Trollope's somehow insightful takes on the perennial career vs. child-rearing dilemma. The struggles of Edie, of Russell, and of children Rosa, Matt, Ben and their various partners are deftly rendered in the dialogue that dominates the book; it has a good pace and marks out the narrative decisively. The things her flawed but lovable characters say to each other, in fact, save Trollope's tidily concluded latest from feeling too much like chick lit for the PBS set. (Mar.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.