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A MAN
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FINALIST

ROOM

EMMA DONOGHUE

"Impossible to put down. . . . A riveting, powerful novel. . . .

Room is, hands down, one of the best books of the year."

—*Boston Globe*

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A NOVEL

EMMA DONOGHUE

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Back Bay Books / Little, Brown and Company

237 Park Avenue

New York, NY 10017

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Printed in the United States of America

Originally published in hardcover by Little, Brown and Company, September 2010

First Back Bay international edition, January 2011

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

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International acclaim for
EMMA DONOGHUE'S ROOM

"Emma Donoghue's heart-stopping new novel is right up there with Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*. . . . Donoghue's utterly gripping plot may sound as if it has been ripped from headlines, but there's real art here. What elevates *Room* from a prurient horror story to an exploration of parental love and childhood development and a fresh look at our culture of glut is Donoghue's decision to have five-year-old Jack narrate. . . . *Room* is a big wow."

—Heller McAlpin,
San Francisco Chronicle

"Compelling. . . . Donoghue's Jack is precocious but entirely believable; his passage out of cloistered innocence more universal than you might think. . . . As for Ma, parents everywhere will relate."

—Kim Hubbard, *People*

"Emma Donoghue's writing is superb alchemy, changing innocence into horror and horror into tenderness. *Room* is a book to read in one sitting. When it's over you look up: the world looks the same but you are somehow different and that feeling lingers for days."

—Audrey Niffenegger, author of
The Time Traveler's Wife and
Her Fearful Symmetry

“A whammy of a novel.”

—*Marie Claire*

“I loved *Room*. Such incredible imagination, and dazzling use of language. And with all this, an entirely credible, endearing little boy. It’s unlike anything I’ve ever read before.”

—Anita Shreve, author of
The Pilot’s Wife and Rescue

“An astounding, terrifying novel....It’s a testament to Donoghue’s imagination and empathy that she is able to fashion radiance from such horror.”

—*The New Yorker*

“*Room* is one of the most profoundly affecting books I’ve read in a long time. Jack moved me greatly. His voice, his story, his innocence, his love for Ma combine to create something very unusual and, I think, something very important. I read the book over two days, desperate to know how their story would end....*Room* deserves to reach the widest possible audience.”

—John Boyne, author of
The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

“Part childhood adventure story, part adult thriller, *Room* is above all the most vivid, radiant, and beautiful expression of maternal love I have ever read. Emma Donoghue has stared into the abyss, honored her sources, and returned with the literary equivalent of a great Madonna and Child. This book will break your heart.”

—*Irish Times*

“*Room* is that rarest of entities, an entirely original work of art. I mean it as the highest possible praise when I tell you that I can’t compare it to any other book. Suffice to say that it’s potent, darkly beautiful, and revelatory.”

—Michael Cunningham, author of
The Hours and *By Nightfall*

“Riveting.... Such a story, such a mother!... Though the story’s chilling circumstances reflect the horrors endured by tabloid-famous abductees, Donoghue avoids all sensationalism. Instead, she gracefully distills what it means to be a mother—and what it’s like for a child whose entire world measures just 11×11 .”

—Lisa Schwarzbaum, *Entertainment Weekly*

“*Room* is a feat of both infectious claustrophobia and controlled perspective, and Donoghue pays especially close attention to the way language works in a two-person world.”

—Radhika Jones, *Time*

“Donoghue brings her story to a powerful close that feels exactly right. This is a truly memorable novel, one that can be read through myriad lenses—psychological, sociological, political. It presents an utterly unique way to talk about love, all the while giving us a fresh, expansive eye on the world in which we live.”

Aimee Bender, *New York Times Book Review*

“The story is told, with unsurpassed panache.... *Room* will certainly be much garlanded, and it will deserve every prize it gets. Fantastic—but deeply, deeply disturbing.”

—A. N. Wilson, *Reader’s Digest*

“A novel so disturbing that we defy you to stop thinking about it, days later.... This blend of allegory and true crime (Donoghue has said she was influenced by several recent news stories) is beautifully served by Jack’s wise but innocent voice.... The enviable trick here is that Donoghue makes you want to stay with Ma and Jack, whether they’re in their own private prison or out in the so-called free world.”

—Sara Nelson, *O, The Oprah Magazine*

“*Room* reads as smooth as ice-cream and Donoghue quickly builds a compelling view of this strange existence.... As a life-affirming fable of parent-child love, and an antidote to the prurience of so much crime fiction, it’s a triumph.”

—*Daily Telegraph*

“*Room* has all kinds of emotional wallop. But what makes the emotion possible is that this book is built like a finely crafted instrument that perfectly merges art and function.... *Room* is so beautifully contrived that it never once seems contrived. But be warned: once you enter, you’ll be Donoghue’s willing prisoner right down to the last page.”

—Malcolm Jones, *Newsweek*

“Impressive.... Like *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Room* intrigues us by offering an oblique view of adult behavior filtered through the partial understanding of that child. But Donoghue does much more with the gap between Jack’s limited perspective on the world and our own fallen knowledge. *Room* meditates on the nature and mixed blessings of love, innocence, and motherhood itself.”

—Laura Miller, *Salon.com*

“Artfully empathetic....Donoghue makes the gutsy and difficult choice to keep the book anchored somewhere inside Jack’s head....The book never loses track of this boy’s utterly plausible, vividly described thought processes.”
—Janet Maslin, *New York Times*

“In the hands of this audacious novelist, Jack’s talk is more than a victim-and-survivor story: it works as a study of child development, shows the power of language and storytelling, and is a kind of sustained poem in praise of motherhood and parental love.”
—*Observer*

“The book works on many levels. On the surface, it’s a suspense novel about kidnapping victims and their attempts to escape their confinement. It’s also a compelling tale about a mother’s love for her child, the lengths she’ll go to in order to protect him, and the co-dependence that often develops between parents and their children....*Room* is likely to haunt readers for days, if not longer. It is, hands down, one of the best books of the year.”

—Liz Raftery, *Boston Globe*

ALSO BY EMMA DONOGHUE

The Sealed Letter

Landing

Touchy Subjects

Life Mask

The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits

Slammerkin

Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins

Hood

Stir-fry

Room is for Finn and Una, my best works.

My child

Such trouble I have.

And you sleep, your heart is placid;

you dream in the joyless wood;

in the night nailed in bronze,

in the blue dark you lie still and shine.

Simonides (c. 556–468 BCE),

“Danaë” (tr. Richmond Lattimore)

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Presents

Today I'm five. I was four last night going to sleep in Wardrobe, but when I wake up in Bed in the dark I'm changed to five, abracadabra. Before that I was three, then two, then one, then zero. "Was I minus numbers?"

"Hmm?" Ma does a big stretch.

"Up in Heaven. Was I minus one, minus two, minus three—?"

"Nah, the numbers didn't start till you zoomed down."

"Through Skylight. You were all sad till I happened in your tummy."

"You said it." Ma leans out of Bed to switch on Lamp, he makes everything light up *whoosh*.

I shut my eyes just in time, then open one a crack, then both.

"I cried till I didn't have any tears left," she tells me. "I just lay here counting the seconds."

"How many seconds?" I ask her.

"Millions and millions of them."

"No, but how many exactly?"

"I lost count," says Ma.

"Then you wished and wished on your egg till you got fat."

She grins. "I could feel you kicking."

"What was I kicking?"

"Me, of course."

I always laugh at that bit.

"From the inside, *boom boom*." Ma lifts her sleep T-shirt and makes her tummy jump. "I thought, *Jack's on his way*. First thing in the morning, you slid out onto the rug with your eyes wide open."

I look down at Rug with her red and brown and black all zigging around each other. There's the stain I spilled by mistake getting born. "You cutted the cord and I was free," I tell Ma. "Then I turned into a boy."

"Actually, you were a boy already." She gets out of Bed and goes to Thermostat to hot the air.

I don't think he came last night after nine, the air's always different if he came. I don't ask because she doesn't like saying about him.

"Tell me, Mr. Five, would you like your present now or after breakfast?"

"What is it, what is it?"

"I know you're excited," she says, "but remember not to nibble your finger, germs could sneak in the hole."

"To sick me like when I was three with throw-up and diarrhea?"

"Even worse than that," says Ma, "germs could make you die."

"And go back to Heaven early?"

"You're still biting it." She pulls my hand away.

“Sorry.” I sit on the bad hand. “Call me Mr. Five again.”

“So, Mr. Five,” she says, “now or later?”

I jump onto Rocker to look at Watch, he says 07:14. I can skateboard on Rocker without holding on to her, then I *whee* back onto Duvet and I’m snowboarding instead. “When are presents meant to open?”

“Either way would be fun. Will I choose for you?” asks Ma.

“Now I’m five, I have to choose.” My finger’s in my mouth again, I put it in my armpit and lock shut. “I choose—now.”

She pulls a something out from under her pillow, I think it was hiding all night invisibly. It’s a tube of ruled paper, with the purple ribbon all around from the thousand chocolates we got the time Christmas happened. “Open it up,” she tells me. “Gently.”

I figure out to do off the knot, I make the paper flat, it’s a drawing, just pencil, no colors. I don’t know what it’s about, then I turn it. “Me!” Like in Mirror but more, my head and arm and shoulder in my sleep T-shirt. “Why are the eyes of the me shut?”

“You were asleep,” says Ma.

“How you did a picture asleep?”

“No, I was awake. Yesterday morning and the day before and the day before that, I put the lamp on and drew you.” She stops smiling. “What’s up, Jack? You don’t like it?”

“Not—when you’re on at the same time I’m off.”

“Well, I couldn’t draw you while you were awake, or it wouldn’t be a surprise, would it?” Ma waits. “I thought you’d like a surprise.”

“I prefer a surprise and me knowing.”