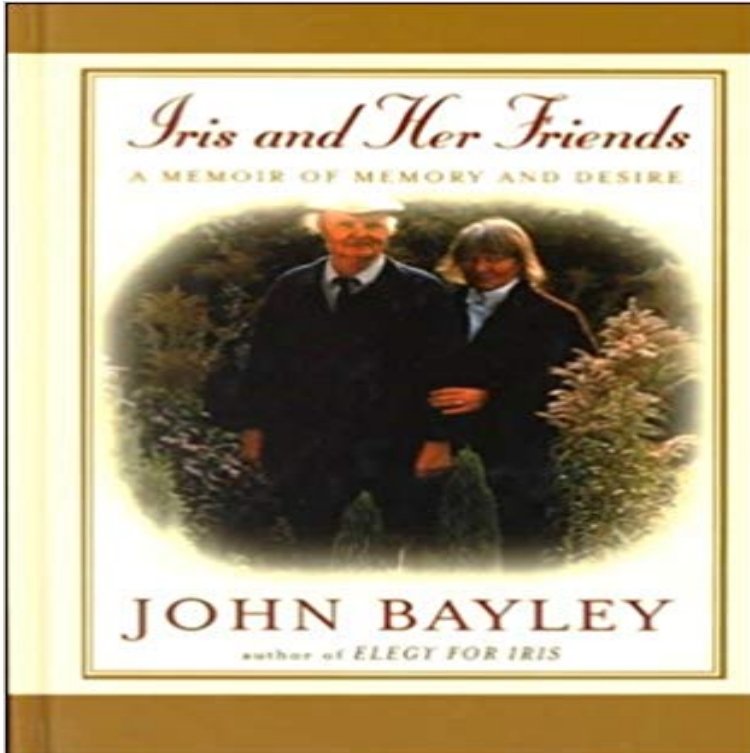


Iris and Her Friends: A Memoir of Memory and Desire



Nothing in the literary world has been as startling as the spotlight shone on the 74-year-old Oxford don John Bayley, whose New York Times best-selling *Elegy for Iris* has spoken to readers the world over about suffering, sacrifice, and love. With this new memoir, the life story of this extraordinary partnership is deepened. John Bayley began writing *Iris and Her Friends* late at night, while his wife, the novelist Iris Murdoch, succumbed to the terminal stages of Alzheimers Disease. In a Proustian irony, as Iris is losing her memory, Bayley is flooded with long-buried memories of his own--an inverse relationship that has created literature of the most extraordinary resonance. Eschewing the gloom associated with his family tragedy, Bayley luminously brings to life the remarkable story of a philosopher whose novels celebrated the goodness of everyday existence. In bursts of vivid, lyrical reverie, Bayley also recreates the unforgettable scenes of his youth: being born to a civil servant in colonial India; his epiphanic childhood vacations at the seaside English resort Littlestone-on-Sea, which gave him his first, important glimmers of adult consciousness; his discovery of the power of literature, especially the work of Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Bowen, and Marcel Proust; and of course his long, heartbreaking romance with Iris. This is the transcendent work of a modest, generous, utterly brilliant man, whose deep examinations of his own life--both its tragedies and its joy--will give readers the same healing insight as did its remarkable predecessor. John Bayleys *Iris and Her Friends* will endure as nothing less than a classic of true love and sorrow.

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