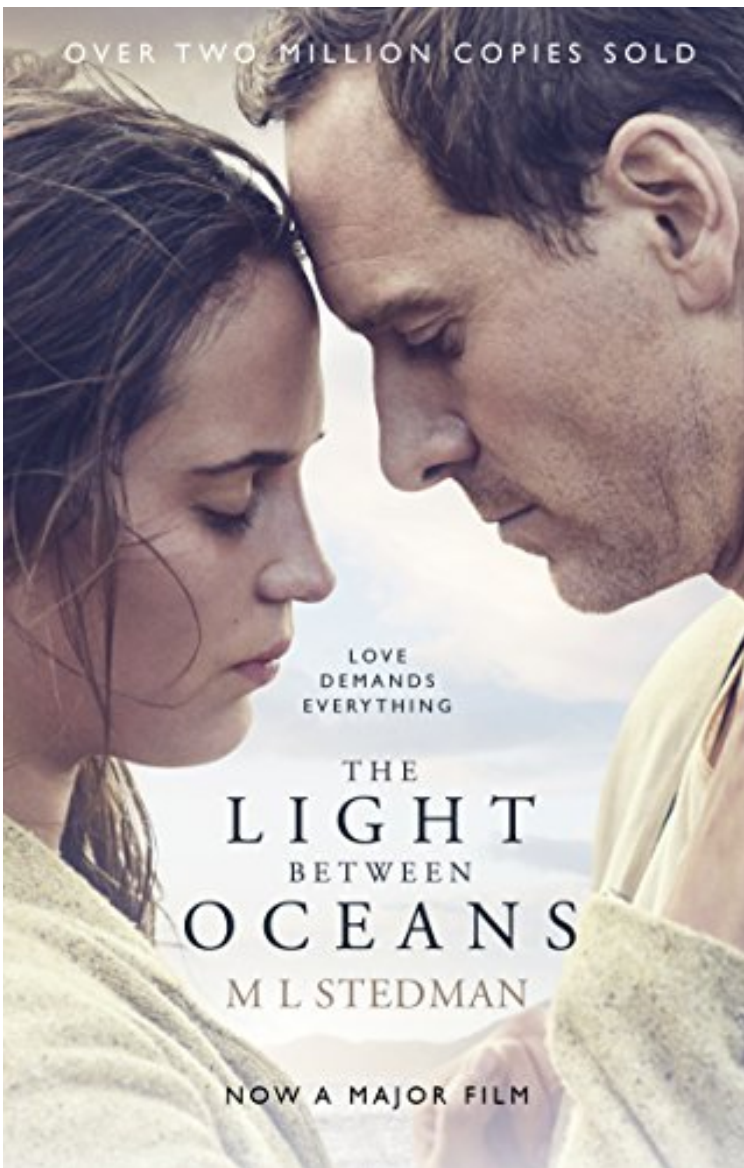


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# The Light Between Oceans



*Par M L Stedman*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe global bestselling debut, now a word-of-mouth classic - the story of a lighthouse keeper and his wife who face a life-changing moral dilemma when a baby in a boat washes up on their island.THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER2.3 million copies sold The international bestselling book of the major Hollywood film starring Michael Fassbender and Alicia Vikander A Richard and Judy bookclub favouriteGoodreads historical category winner'Extraordinary and heartrending' MARKUS ZUSAK, author of The Book ThiefA boat washes up on the shore of a remote lighthouse keeper's island. It holds a dead man - and a crying baby. The only two islanders, Tom and his wife Izzy, are about to make a devastating decision. They break the rules and follow their hearts. What happens next will break yours.'Unforgettable'

Guardian'A moving tale ...prepare to weep' New York TimesExtraitLight Between Oceans CHAPTER 1  
16th December 1918 Yes, I realize that, Tom Sherbourne said. He was sitting in a spartan room, barely cooler than the sultry day outside. The Sydney summer rain pelted the window, and sent the people on the pavement scurrying for shelter. I mean very tough. The man across the desk leaned forward for emphasis. Its no picnic. Not that Byron Bays the worst posting on the Lights, but I want to make sure you know what youre in for. He tamped down the tobacco with his thumb and lit his pipe. Toms letter of application had told the same story as many a fellows around that time: born 28 September 1893; war spent in the Army; experience with the International Code and Morse; physically fit and well; honorable discharge. The rules stipulated that preference should be given to ex-servicemen. It cant Tom stopped, and began again. All due respect, Mr. Coughlan, its not likely to be tougher than the Western Front. The man looked again at the details on the discharge papers, then at Tom, searching for something in his eyes, in his face. No, son. Youre probably right on that score. He rattled off some rules: You pay your own passage to every posting. Youre relief, so you dont get holidays. Permanent staff get a months leave at the end of each three-year contract. He took up his fat pen and signed the form in front of him. As he rolled the stamp back and forth across the inkpad he said, Welcomehe thumped it down in three places on the paperto the Commonwealth Lighthouse Service. On the form, 16th December 1918 glistened in wet ink. The six months relief posting at Byron Bay, up on the New South Wales coast, with two other keepers and their families, taught Tom the basics of life on the Lights. He followed that with a stint down on Maatsuyker, the wild island south of Tasmania where it rained most days of the year and the chickens blew into the sea during storms. On the Lights, Tom Sherbourne has plenty of time to think about the war. About the faces, the voices of the blokes who had stood beside him, who saved his life one way or another; the ones whose dying words he heard, and those whose muttered jumbles he couldnt make out, but who he nodded to anyway. Tom isnt one of the men whose legs trailed by a hank of sinews, or whose guts cascaded from their casing like slithering eels. Nor were his lungs turned to glue or his brains to stodge by the gas. But hes scarred all the same, having to live in the same skin as the man who did the things that needed to be done back then. He carries that other shadow, which is cast inward. He tries not to dwell on it: hes seen plenty of men turned worse than useless that way. So he gets on with life around the edges of this thing hes got no name for. When he dreams about those years, the Tom who is experiencing them, the Tom who is there with blood on his hands, is a boy of eight or so. Its this small boy whos up against blokes with guns and bayonets, and hes worried because his school socks have slipped down and he cant hitch them up because hell have to drop his gun to do it, and hes barely big enough even to hold that. And he cant find his mother anywhere. Then he wakes and hes in a place where theres just wind and waves and light, and the intricate machinery that keeps the flame burning and the lantern turning. Always turning, always looking over its shoulder. If he can only get far enough awayfrom people, from memorytime will do its job. Thousands of miles away on the west coast, Janus Rock was the furthest place on the continent from Toms childhood home in Sydney. But Janus Light was the last sign of Australia he had seen as his troopship steamed for Egypt in 1915. The smell of the eucalypts had wafted for miles offshore from Albany, and when the scent faded away he was suddenly sick at the loss of something he didnt know he could miss. Then, hours later, true and steady, the light, with its five-second flash, came into viewhis homelands furthest reachand its memory stayed with him through the years of hell that followed, like a farewell kiss. When, in June 1920, he got news of an urgent vacancy going on Janus, it was as though the light there were calling to him. Teetering on the edge of the continental shelf, Janus was not a popular posting. Though its Grade One hardship rating meant a slightly higher salary, the old hands said it wasnt worth the money, which was meager all the same. The keeper Tom replaced on Janus was Trimble Docherty, who had caused a stir by reporting that his wife was signaling to passing ships by stringing up messages in the colored flags of the International Code. This was unsatisfactory to the authorities for two reasons: first, because the Deputy Director of Lighthouses had some years previously forbidden signaling by flags on Janus, as vessels put themselves at risk by sailing close enough to decipher them; and secondly, because the wife in question was recently deceased. Considerable correspondence on the subject was generated in triplicate between Fremantle and Melbourne, with the Deputy Director in Fremantle putting the case for Docherty and his years of excellent service, to a Head Office concerned strictly with efficiency and cost and obeying the rules. A compromise was reached by which a temporary keeper would be engaged while Docherty was given six months medical leave. We wouldnt normally send a single man to Janusits pretty remote and a wife and family can be a great practical help, not just a comfort, the District Officer had said to Tom. But seeing its only temporary Youll leave for Partageuse in two days,

he said, and signed him up for six months. There wasnt much to organize. No one to farewell. Two days later, Tom walked up the gangplank of the boat, armed with a kit bag and not much else. The SS Prometheus worked its way along the southern shores of Australia, stopping at various ports on its run between Sydney and Perth. The few cabins reserved for first-class passengers were on the upper deck, toward the bow. In third class, Tom shared a cabin with an elderly sailor. Been making this trip for fifty years they wouldnt have the cheek to ask me to pay. Bad luck, you know, the man had said cheerfully, then returned his attention to the large bottle of over-proof rum that kept him occupied. To escape the alcohol fumes, Tom took to walking the deck during the day. Of an evening there usually be a card game belowdecks. You could still tell at a glance whod been over there and whod sat the war out at home. You could smell it on a man. Each tended to keep to his own kind. Being in the bowels of the vessel brought back memories of the troopships that took them first to the Middle East, and later to France. Within moments of arriving on board, they deduced, almost by an animal sense, who was an officer, who was lower ranks; where theyd been. Just like on the troopships, the focus was on finding a bit of sport to liven up the journey. The game settled on was familiar enough: first one to score a souvenir off a first-class passenger was the winner. Not just any souvenir, though. The designated article was a pair of ladies drawers. Prize moneys doubled if shes wearing them at the time. The ringleader, a man by the name of McGowan, with a mustache, and fingers yellowed from his Woodbines, said hed been chatting to one of the stewards about the passenger list: the choice was limited. There were ten cabins in all. A lawyer and his wife best give them a wide berth; some elderly couples, a pair of old spinsters (promising), but best of all, some toffs daughter traveling on her own. I reckon we can climb up the side and in through her window, he announced. Whos with me? The danger of the enterprise didnt surprise Tom. Hed heard dozens of such tales since he got back. Men whod taken to risking their lives on a whim treating the boom gates at level crossings as a gallop jump; swimming into rips to see if they could get out. So many men who had dodged death over there now seemed addicted to its lure. Still, this lot were free agents now. Probably just full of talk. The following night, when the nightmares were worse than usual, Tom decided to escape them by walking the decks. It was two a.m. He was free to wander wherever he wanted at that hour, so he paced methodically, watching the moonlight leave its wake on the water. He climbed to the upper deck, gripping the stair rail to counter the gentle rolling, and stood a moment at the top, taking in the freshness of the breeze and the steadiness of the stars that showered the night. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a glimmer come on in one of the cabins. Even first-class passengers had trouble sleeping sometimes, he mused. Then, some sixth sense awoke in him that familiar, indefinable instinct for trouble. He moved silently toward the cabin, and looked in through the window. In the dim light, he saw a woman flat against the wall, pinned there even though the man before her wasnt touching her. He was an inch away from her face, with a leer Tom had seen too often. He recognized the man from belowdecks, and remembered the prize. Bloody idiots. He tried the door, and it opened. Leave her alone, he said as he stepped into the cabin. He spoke calmly, but left no room for debate. The man spun around to see who it was, and grinned when he recognized Tom. Christ! Thought you were a steward! You can give me a hand, I was just I said leave her alone! Clear out. Now. But I havent finished. I was just going to make her day. He reeked of drink and stale tobacco. Tom put a hand on his shoulder, with a grip so hard that the man cried out. He was a good six inches shorter than Tom, but tried to take a swing at him all the same. Tom seized his wrist and twisted it. Name and rank! McKenzie. Private. 3277. The unrequested serial number followed like a reflex. Private, youll apologize to this young lady and youll get back to your bunk and you wont show your face on deck until we berth, you understand me? Yes, sir! He turned to the woman. Beg your pardon, Miss. Didnt mean any harm. Still terrified, the woman gave the slightest nod. Now, out! Tom said, and the man, deflated by sudden sobriety, shuffled from the cabin. You all right? Tom asked the woman. I think so. Did he hurt you? He didnt she was saying it to herself as much as to him he didnt actually touch me. He took in the womans face her gray eyes seemed calmer now. Her dark hair was loose, in waves down to her arms, and her fists still gathered her nightgown to her neck. Tom reached for her dressing gown from a hook on the wall and draped it over her shoulders. Thank you, she said. Must have got an awful fright. Im afraid some of us arent used to civilized company these days. She didnt speak. You wont get any more trouble from him. He righted a chair that had been overturned in the encounter. Up to you whether you report him, Miss. Id say hes not the full quid now. Her eyes asked a question. Being over there changes a man. Right and wrong dont look so different any more to some. He turned to go, but put his head back through the doorway. Youve got every right to have him up on charges if you want. But I reckon hes probably got enough troubles. Like I said up to you, and he disappeared through the door. *Revue de presse*"A love story that is both persuasive and

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