

*Love for Lydia*, by H. E. Bates.

As far back as anyone could remember the Aspens had been the one rich, landed family in the small English village of Evensford. In the late Thirties when this story begins only two elderly sisters and a ne'er-do-well brother remained. So when a niece, Lydia, came to the old house to live; when the old ladies wanted her to be "free" and asked one of the young men from a local middle-class family to teach her to skate and to take her dancing, it set in motion a new alchemy, an unorthodox and unpredictable chain of events. The growth of Lydia's self-confidence, her effect on the close friendship of three young men, and on a fourth who was not their friend, make a dramatic but credible (on some occasions a little less credible than others) story, all nicely tied up at the end. The hero

at times seems rather a stick, the heroine sometimes a complete if fascinating vixen, but Mr. Bates can be trusted never to let a good story down and he makes the reader feel that for a time he has actually been a part of the life of that small rural village and has shared the experiences of a group of vital young people.

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