

BITTERSWEET JOURNEY

A Modestly Erotic Novel of Love, Longing, and Chocolate.

By Enid Futterman.

Viking, \$22.95.

When Charlotte was a little girl, her father would often hide a Hershey bar in his pocket for her to find. Later, as Charlotte nears 40, she discovers that her taste for chocolate is the only thing that turns her on. She abruptly leaves her husband — “after all the years, all the love, all the doubt, all the *furniture*, it was over with a suddenness that stunned her” — and embarks on a sensual journey. For over a year, she roams through Europe in search of the most delectable morsel of chocolate as well as the most titillating sexual encounter. Despite her assignations with Trüffel Torte in Vienna and a 22-year-old busker in London and Paris, she is still not satisfied. And neither is the reader. Rather than treating us to sumptuous accounts of chocolate-coated euphoria, Enid Futterman’s weighty descriptions of her protagonist’s eating binges leave us feeling sick and stuffed. And her “modestly erotic” sex scenes are sure candidates for The Literary Review’s Bad Sex Award: “In bed, he was a man. He took the lead in the first, slow, catlike dance, pawing as she purred, licking as she stretched, biting as she scratched, until she felt as if she could be penetrated anywhere.” Aside from a list of addresses for international chocolate meccas and a few recipes at the back of the book, this gastro-literary journey is far more bitter than sweet.

JENNY MCPHEE