



You Are Not a Stranger Here: Stories

By Adam Haslett

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You Are Not a Stranger Here: Stories By Adam Haslett

In these unforgettable stories, the acclaimed author of *Imagine Me Gone* explores lives that appear shattered by loss and discovers entire worlds hidden inside them. The impact is at once harrowing and thrilling.

An elderly inventor, burning with manic creativity, tries to reconcile with his estranged gay son. A bereaved boy draws a thuggish classmate into a relationship of escalating guilt and violence. A genteel middle-aged woman, a long-time resident of a psychiatric hospital, becomes the confidante of a lovelorn teenaged volunteer. Told with Chekhovian restraint and compassion, and conveying both the sorrow of life and the courage with which people rise to meet it, *You Are Not a Stranger Here* is a triumph of storytelling.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In his debut story collection, *You Are Not a Stranger Here*, Adam Haslett drags into the light subjects often left in the cellar. Most of his stories are told from the viewpoint of the mentally ill (though one, "The Good Doctor," shows us madness from a caregiver's perspective). The rest of the stories deal with closeted homosexuality: boys who are just learning their identity, men who have never come to terms with it. Haslett is an enormously compassionate writer, and shows a lovely, plain-written acuity about his people. His writing is a convincing inside job--he never romanticizes or oversimplifies. In "The Volunteer," an old woman at a care facility is haunted by the voice of an ancestress named Hester: "For more than two decades, Elizabeth Maynard has done exactly as she is told and the voice of Hester, which has cost her so much, comes only quietly and intermittently. It is a negative sort of achievement, she thinks, to have spent a life warding something off."

Haslett has a gift for writing quietly about sensational topics: men cruising each other in the park at night; an abusive, self-hating relationship between two adolescent boys. The stories can get a bit too fancy: the writer can't resist the ironic twist or the surprise ending. Still, this is a beautifully written collection that's as heartfelt as it is intelligent. --*Claire Dederer*

From Publishers Weekly

In this affecting debut collection, Yale Law School student Haslett explores the complex phenomena of depression and mental illness, drawing a powerful connection between those who suffer and those who attempt to alleviate that suffering. In "The Good Doctor," Frank, a young M.D., goes out of his way to discover the origin of his patient's illness, only to learn of both her untreatable pain and his own fears and regrets: "The fact was he still felt like a sponge, absorbing the pain of the people he listened to." In "The Beginnings of Grief," suffering becomes a way of healing when a teenager coming to terms with both his homosexuality and his parents' sudden deaths seeks connection wherever he can find it, even in the pain inflicted by a classmate's violence. Often, Haslett convincingly interweaves the perspectives and lives of seemingly disparate individuals. In "The Volunteer," a teenager's awkward incomprehension in the face of his first sexual encounter bizarrely coincides with the breakdown of a schizophrenic woman he visits after school. Not all of the stories are charged with this kind of emotional complexity, however, and some tend toward the sentimental, as does "The Storyteller," in which the clinically depressed Paul, who feels himself to be nothing but a burden to his wife, Ellen, rediscovers his vitality in a chance encounter with an elderly woman and her dying son. Though the thematic similarity of many of the stories dulls their startling initial impact, this is a strikingly assured first effort.

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From Library Journal

Those setting collection policy in public libraries are often forced to base their decisions on genre alone and will buy a detective novel, for instance, at the expense of a collection of short stories, especially one by a first-time author. Haslett's debut shows what is wrong with this approach. Courageous and compelling as any in today's fiction, the despairing characters in these nine stories are all related to someone who has left or will leave them, usually owing to mental illness. In "Divination," for instance, a sensitive boy reflects on the precise moment when he became alienated from his family. In "Notes to My Biographer," the narrator, in a burst of manic impulsion, decides to visit a son he has not seen in years. His irascible sense of humor propels the story until we learn that his son treats his inherited disease with medication that the father won't ingest; reconciliation is only possible if the son stops taking his. Such uncompromising and realistic representations

of depression and its symptoms are commendable. Too often, the sufferers' loved ones are depicted with lugubrious sobbing, but the narratives move forward with few detours, and readers will turn the pages accordingly. Strongly recommended for mid- and large-sized public libraries and academic literary collections. Edward Keane, Long Island Univ. Lib., Brooklyn, NY

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Edward Apodaca:

In this 21st century, people become competitive in each and every way. By being competitive currently, people have to do something to make them survive, being in the middle of typically the crowded place and notice simply by surrounding. One thing that at times many people have underestimated this for a while is reading. Sure, by reading a reserve your ability to survive raise then having chance to remain than other is high. For you personally who want to start reading a new book, we give you this You Are Not a Stranger Here: Stories book as beginner and daily reading reserve. Why, because this book is usually more than just a book.

David Black:

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Steve Franklin:

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