



Spoiled: Stories

Caitlin Macy

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BONUS: This edition contains a *Spoiled* discussion guide.

A young woman does a good deed for her nanny, only to have it go horribly wrong. A newly married woman struggles to gain the upper hand with her self-assured cleaning woman. An anxious woman desperate for an authentic experience makes a rash decision to leave the grounds of her Moroccan luxury hotel. In this sophisticated and provocative story collection, acclaimed author Caitlin Macy turns her unsparing eye on well-heeled thirtysomething women who, despite their education and affluence, struggle to keep their footing in their relationships with their friends, spouses, and children—not to mention their help. Full of surprising, sometimes shocking insights and brimming with outrage and compassion, *Spoiled* is a remarkable collection from a boldly talented writer.

Spoiled: Stories Details

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Author : Caitlin Macy

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From Reader Review Spoiled: Stories for online ebook

Squirrel Circus says

I rarely read fiction these days, and this was pulled from one of the recommendation shelves of From My Shelf Books & Gifts, Wellsboro, PA - on my vintage auto tour last week - It was a super pick, and the back cover blurb referencing "a grown up Gossip Girl" doesn't do it justice. Check it out - or borrow it from me, if you're local!

Khanson919 says

One thing all these stories had in common was very unlikeable women who never seemed stratified with anything in their lives. They were whiny and bratty and wanted the world to see them in a way they didn't see themselves. I know the titled is Spoiled so I should have been prepared, but you would have to think someone in one of the stories would be likable and that just wasn't the case.

Sunny Shore says

This well written collection of short stories about the rich, mostly women and mostly those born in the '70's, is similar to the work done by John Cheever, John Updike and Richard Yates (Revolutionary Road) 40 or 50 years ago. It pokes fun (and not so fun) at the rich and privileged whose emphasis is on the "good life": boarding schools, nannies, buying that great apartment in NYC. Caitlin Macy pulls the rug out from under the rich and famous. Each story presents us with a character, only to have this character fall flat on her face in some way. You will be happier that each of these shallow creatures learned her lesson after reading the stories. I gave it a 5 because the writing and premise of each story really worked and I was entertained thoroughly. The author, a graduate of Yale and the good life knows what she's talking about so you know you're getting a front row seat to the truth. I recommend mostly to women, who can relate the best, but a wonderful read for anyone who likes short stories that work, which is sometimes no easy feat.

Lauren says

I started this book thinking it would be something kind of "bubble gummy," but it actually wasn't at all. The protagonists of each story are, for the most part, well educated women - some who are independently wealthy and others striving to be. Based on the title of the book I expected an indictment of the lifestyles of the rich, and that element did exist, but Macy proves herself a clever writer. The true indictments have nothing to do with socio-economic class as they do with mindset (as evinced through the thoughts and expectations of the characters). Interestingly, I related to many of the thoughts and expectations of the characters, I'm sure it was Macy's intention that most readers would relate. For a moment, as a reader, I felt the writer's finger pointing at me. I appreciate that.

Michelle says

I liked these more than I expected to, but then I am a sucker for stories of how the privileged live. Macy is like a harder-edged Curtis Sittenfeld: instead of identifying with the slightly-less-privileged heroines of these stories, one feels their unpleasantness, their envy, their.....reality. So, in a way, the sympathy is more blushing and more real. And, yes, I guess I did, partially, both identify with and despise those unhappy, hypercritical girlfriends (been there, done that, so glad I'm no longer one of them). Two stories are brilliant gems: "Christie" and "Eden's Gate". Worth the price of admission. "Christie" really sends up the snobbery of the not-quite-entirely privileged but intellectually snobby and Eden's Gate," told from the point of view of the more privileged and rather guileless boyfriend, is brilliant and chilling in its portrayal of someone who will stop at nothing to get ahead and yet, is still loved by said boyfriend. Her stories about kids don't work, though her stories of mothers/babysitters having to deal with kids do. She's talented, and the stories dragged me in and made me finish them without pause--even the not-so-great ones. I guess this counts as a recommendation!

Jill says

favorites were The Red Coat, Annabel's Mother and Taroudant

Yulia says

Spoiled chronicles the self-consciousness of the "liberal elite," as they are labeled in the media these days--educated, politically-correct upper-middle-class individuals (most in their late twenties to mid-thirties, but one a teenager) who know better than to dismiss those who don't have what they do. Embarrassed by their privileges, they're uneasy about having gotten what they wanted--whether it be a wealthy husband, a horse, an enviable home, an acting or writing career or not having to work at all--without making any great compromises or struggling more first. Contrary to the title, these are women who make an especial effort not to vocalize their critical thoughts about others, but do what they can to please both loved ones and strangers. As one narrator notes, "I'll never be one of the careless rich [. . .] This will never not be a luxury" (p. 194).

In the course of each of these well-written, sufficiently-developed stories, all of whose narrators have individuated pasts and preoccupations without being burdened by unnecessary information, the narrators (all but one being female) are made to reconsider their assumptions about their own choices and behavior. This is a collection about people being humbled by looking at themselves from another's perspective.

As predictably as the twist in every O'Henry story ending, the last lines of each story shed new light on the subject of the narrator's disapproval, annoyance, and condescension and force them not to simply try to make a good impression in front of others but to empathize with the target of their ire. They also point the finger at "you," the reader, for implicitly nodding in agreement to the narrator's biases and judgments.

For the most part, this is a successful pattern, though "The Secret Vote" tries too hard to tie the 2004 presidential election to a woman's decision whether to continue a pregnancy, while another story, "Bait and Switch," ends with too lengthy a lecture to the self in an unconvincing gush of personal and familial insight. What "The Secret Vote" does offer, though, is this interesting insight into our own system of judging: "Poor Maureen had never discovered that a new morality had overtaken the old, and the former was all about

maintaining personal boundaries--talk to the hand, dump that addict friend, wash that problem person out of your hair, and congratulate yourself afterward on your inner growth" (p. 50). It gives you a lot to think about, no?

"Eden's Gate" is the most successful in making the reader feel the awkwardness and tension of a situation in which you're not sure whom (if anyone) to side with in an argument, whether one partner is being too light-hearted or the other too serious and dramatic, whether the "right thing" to do is agree with your partner when he or she is being willfully self-righteous or take a stand on what seems right to you, even if it means taking the side of a stranger. This story best achieves the social and moral tightrope that Macy tries to pull off in the other stories, in which we're made to wonder if we've been too quick to judge or not been empathetic enough.

Turning the previous stories' predictable setup on its head, "Taroudant" gives a refreshing end to the collection by presenting a narrator who is stubborn, difficult to please, and bizarrely critical. We're sure of what to think of her till the final scene, which puts all her pettiness in a new light and makes us question why we ever believed we understood the characters from what little was shown us.

I look forward to reading Macy's first book now.

Jae says

You know, I don't demand that protagonists be likable, but it does make a book easier to read when someone, anyone in the book isn't totally unpleasant. Technically well-written short stories, but I ended up thinking, what's the point?

Carla says

Ugh, I just can't do it. I read two stories ("Christie" and "Spoiled") and was ready to put the book down....as in a slow, painless death. Then I read the reviews on Goodreads, which were predominately positive, and thought I'd give another story a chance so I read "Annabel's Mother." Still can't do this book. The topics seem so shallow, the situations so canned and the writing mediocre.

Nicholas says

These were pretty great, and struck me as far more serious than her second novel, *Mrs.*, which I did like but found a bit on the "lite" side at times. These stories all focus on wealthy white girls and women who are hyper-concerned about status. While that might seem a bit niche, ultimately they're also just about how all of us manage our expectations, our self-consciousness, and our place in the world.

Abby says

Fans of haute Manhattan will appreciate the setting of the stories. Macy is an astute social observer, but

observant details do not a short story make. The characters never reach self-actualization/realization/reflection and the reader remains ultimately dissatisfied.

Tasha says

I checked this book out because it got great reviews but I couldn't get into it. I read the first two short stories and then put the book down. So not that great of a read to me.

Caitlin says

I'm looking forward to rereading this in 1-3 years' time.

Linda S says

Some good, some not. I skipped some stories entirely when the first page did not catch my interest...but then I guess that's the beauty in a book of short stories. Unfortunately I only read three quarters of the book since it came due at the library and I couldn't imagine paying late fees on a book I didn't like that much. I didn't find many of the characters likeable and more often than not was just annoyed with them.

Kelly Fagan says

disappointing
