



The Hour Between

Sebastian Stuart

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“I love stories about friendship, particularly those in which friendship is recalled under a nostalgic haze...I found the whole thing quite lovely...Stuart knows how to cut the pathos with some sharp wit.”—**Daniel Goldin** of Boswell Book Company for National Public Radio

When Arthur McDougal is kicked out of Manhattan’s toniest boys’ school, his parents ship him off to the only place that will take him in—the Christian Science–inflected Spooner School. There, in the woods of Connecticut, Arthur meets Katrina Felt, the charming, troubled daughter of a Hollywood movie star. As Arthur struggles with his sexuality and Katrina’s beauty and talent land her in a Broadway musical, the two forge a tender friendship. But while Arthur’s confidence grows, Katrina is pulled down by the heartbreaking secrets and sorrows of her past. By year’s end, their lives will be changed forever, and their friendship will be over. Set in the late 1960s, *The Hour Between* is a compelling portrait of a time and place, replete with drugs, sex, Andy Warhol, a cast of truly memorable secondary characters, and some of the sharpest and funniest dialogue in recent memory.

Sebastian Stuart has written novels, plays, and screenplays. His last novel was ghostwritten (with acknowledgment): *Charm!* by Kendall Hart, a character on the soap opera *All My Children*. *Charm!* spent five weeks on *The New York Times* bestseller list. A native New Yorker, Stuart now lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with novelist Stephen McCauley.

The Hour Between Details

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From Reader Review The Hour Between for online ebook

Michael says

Beautifully written, poignant coming-of-age tale about a young man finishing high school at an exclusive boarding school during the 1960's. Arthur's life is forever changed when he meets the fabulous and troubled Katrina Felt. Sebastian Stuart draws a beautiful portrait of growing up in an era of change.

Gene Hult says

An entertaining, very well-written boarding school, gay coming-of-age story, which perhaps leans on too many of its reference sources too solidly. I kept wondering if I'd read the book before, so strong was my occasional sense of déjà vu. There's some Salinger in the plot, some Leavitt and Cunningham and White and Fitzgerald and Isherwood . . . and weirdly, it reminded me a lot of Lev Grossman's *The Magicians* without the magic. And Rowling, too! But these are not bad forbears; they should inform this novel, but perhaps not so potently.

That said, I enjoyed reading *The Hour Between* very much. The language is supple and clear, the characters are believable and witty, and the setting is lovely. I loved the Liza/Zelda character enough, even though the manic pixie is overplayed, as is the reticent uptight young gay, Arthur, who is the narrator/outsider, who was also likable in his own way, if familiar.

Arthur's infatuation and adventures with a classmate jock had some real heat, but the climactic sex scene was unfortunately elided.

Even after writing this, I'm still wondering if I'd read this book before! I think not, though, because I hope I would have remembered being this involved in the story.

Lauri says

my amazon review.

I had gotten this book for my husband because he liked *The Mentor*. He is into murder-mysteries. After reading the cover I decided I should read it before I gave it to him. He will not be getting it to read, definitely not his style.

As for me, I thought it was okay. I was in college in the '60s so could relate to many of the people and things going on, i.e. Andy Warhol, etc. and even the coming of age stuff. I guess I somehow just expected more and was relieved when I finally finished the book and could move on to a new book.

Flannery says

Things I liked about this book:

Stuart's writing style

Reading the perspective of a gay teenager (I don't know that I ever have before)

The dialogue in Sophia's class

Things I did not like about this book:

I wanted more--more to happen in terms of conversations between Arthur and his parents about him being gay, more in terms of Arthur finding Katrina in the present (though this is selfish of me), and more in terms of growth of the characters. On that note, I know that it is natural for people to just grow apart, especially at high school age, but that does not mean that people NEVER have the conversations they need to have. This does happen *some* of the time. Arthur never talked to Katrina about her bad choices and her family relationships, Nicholas never tells Sapphire how he feels, Arthur and his parents never *really* talk about his homosexuality, etc.

I suppose that it says a lot about this book that I wanted *more* rather than wanting it to end. Stuart wrote a humorous (at points), entertaining take on what could've been a typical "boarding school coming-of-age" novel. I read it in one afternoon.

Joe Barker says

I don't usually like to review books right away, the emotions are too raw, and the situation may be caught up in my last emotion instead of my overall emotion. However, this novel didn't inspire any overall emotion. For the majority of the story there was little emotional reaction to anything. It was one of those 'good books but ehh take it or leave it.' Then, it was so much more than that.

Authors are in the habit of encouraging idealized, romanticized, or demonized version of situations. When in reality, love is romantic enough, people are more fun not idealized, and our behaviors can be more demonic than our imaginations. This book reflects that. Pain and Love in their purest and least romanticized versions, and the way they follow Arthur around his Connecticut boarding school in the late 60's.

The characters were perfect. Attention was given where the character focused, not with extra detail given to characters he wasn't focused on. His new found best friend Katrina is the daughter of a famous actress, and you learn so much about Katrina...and so very little. *The Hour Between* takes a snap shot of the period between innocence and guilt, between childhood and adulthood, between freedom and responsibility. It takes all of those spaces and plays Russian roulette with the lives of the people playing the game.

The school is a beautiful idea where "Christian science" runs the room. This translates to very little structure, very high encouragement, and free form classrooms and campus. There is sex, drugs, mystery, love, romance, and fun. There is also pain, sobriety, suffering, lies, truths, and all the other blatantly real things that make the world terrible and beautiful.

It seems to be one of those books that you want to ignore, one that takes reality and shoves in your face. There is enough surrealism that the story seems almost improbable, but oh so possible. The ending isn't neat. It isn't even particularly happy. Yet, it is powerful, and in a world where we can lose power so easily, that's worth it.

Trent says

This novel just won the Ferro-Grumley Award as the best LGBT fiction of 2009. I am mystified by that, since the book struck me as arch, trite, and almost completely unbelievable.

Margaret says

Easy to read and interesting reflection about American youth at a boarding school in the 1960's. The characters are troubled adolescents, growing up in wealthy families with high expectations but low levels of parental involvement.

I grew to care about them and their futures.

Well written.

David says

A coming of age story that is well written and rife with all the usuals: class guilt/anxiety, celebrity, counterculture experimentation, suicide, alcoholism, etc. Stuart's novel is a great story and a fun read but it lacks that extra something that makes it truly great! Definitely worth a read, but borrow it from someone before you buy it.

Jurri Saddler says

Due to the rating of Sebastian Stuart's, "The Hour Between" I was a little hesitant to read it. However, after seeing a review excerpt that compared it to John Knowles' "A Separate Peace," one of my favorite books, I decided to give it a try. I am glad I did. I can definitely see the comparison to Knowles book, but the difference lies in a lack of repression throughout the story. I admire that about the story. It kept my attention. The only weak spot I would say is some of the more serious subjects could have been fleshed out a bit more to make them seem more genuine. But the book is called "The Hour Between" which to me indicates just a fragment of the protagonist, Artie's life. So maybe those details had to be contrite.

Lisa says

I loved getting swept into the lives of these teens, grappling to find their place in the world, or at least to make it through their last year of high school.

Robert says

THE HOUR BETWEEN, like all great stories, strives to be a love story, but perhaps it's more of a worship story: boy worships girl, tries to understand her, and -- and I'm going to say fails -- to communicate her story to us. We glimpse the story as he does, through venetian blinds, the staccato images being caused by his obsessions and her disappearances. Brilliantly frank, though at times too clever -- that is, I scratched my head and wondered if people really think like this -- way, way about a world I've never encountered of the wealthy and withered by bad choices they are only too happy to pass onto their neglected children. Sadly, I like the characters themselves, was never deeply moved either by their circumstances, actions, or dreams. I confess to consciously and unconsciously comparing it to CATCHER IN THE RYE and longing for it to plunge into those depths of young adult aspiration and despair, but from my POV, it never did.

WHO AM I?

This book is perfect for "Who am I?" How do you play? Going with your gut at all times you say:

1) who you were in the book and

2) who you wanted to be.

Then your friends get to tell you -- again from their guts --

3) who they thought you were!

Enjoy!

Feel free to play with me, if you've read this book.

Nicolemauerman says

The Hour Between centers around, Arthur, who is sent to a boarding school, Spooner, in Connecticut after being kicked out of his previous boarding schools. Spooner is not your typical boarding school, with kids smoking in class, doing drugs, and having sex. Here the shy, awkward Arthur develops friendships with three fellow classmates, one who is the daughter of a famous actress. The book follows Arthur through his friendship with these three classmates, mostly as he tries to help his actress classmate through her struggles. I enjoyed this book. I felt the characters were well developed and I had a strong understanding of each one. The book also reinforced the stereotypical rich kid behavior: boozing, cheating, and spending exorbitant amounts of money. The one thing I didn't enjoy was the references to past actors and movie stars. These were well before my time and it would have been helpful to have known more about these references.

Mary says

As Seneca the Younger once said, "There's nothing new under the sun", and *The Hour Between* does not challenge that assertion. Predictable, somewhat juvenile, and two-dimensional, it is the story of two "misfits" who become instant best friends at a rather preposterous boarding school in rural Connecticut in 1967. One of the reviews on Amazon gushingly referred to the male protagonist, Arthur MacDougal, as the new Holden Caulfield, a comparison with which I not only strongly disagree but am insulted by on behalf of *Catcher In The Rye* fans everywhere. Holden Caulfield made a true journey, both physically and spiritually; Arthur MacDougal goes meekly along with the status quo, his one shining moment of "rebellion" being when he finally confesses to his parents that he is gay (no spoiler here, his sexual orientation is established within the first two or three pages of the first chapter, and over and over again ad infinitum after that). His parents' reaction is--wait, what reaction? A thread that goes nowhere.

Author Anita Shreve mentioned *Breakfast at Tiffanys* in *her* review--another stretch of the imagination. The main female character, Katrina Felt, is a feeble yet overblown Holiday Golightly wanna-be who doesn't inspire much beyond incredulity and impatience. At one point, apropos of absolutely nothing as far as I can tell, she adopts a kitten (just as Holly Golightly took in a stray cat) but this particular plot device also goes nowhere except to awkwardly hint at Katrina's wholly unsurprising deep dark secret.

This novel is one of NPR's "independent bookseller recommendations" so I had high hopes, especially as the very next book on the list is *Await Your Reply* by Dan Chaon (marvelous!), but, alas, I closed the book this afternoon with relief and an overwhelming feeling of...."meh".

Liz says

Nice read about friendship, with lots of backward glances at how much your family can screw you up. I kept waiting for the conflict – was there going to be something that happened among the friends, possibly because of Arthur's sexuality? Was the school situation going to implode, with the friends taking sides? When it finally came, it seemed underwhelming to me, something I had seen coming for more than half the book.

Tracy says

Light story.
