



Days of Wonder

Keith Stuart

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A story about family, love and finding magic in everyday life, *Days of Wonder* is the most moving novel you'll read all year.

Tom, single father to Hannah, is the manager of a tiny local theatre. On the same day each year, he and its colourful cast of part-time actors have staged a fantastical production just for his little girl, a moment of magic to make her childhood unforgettable.

But there is another reason behind these annual shows: the very first production followed Hannah's diagnosis with a heart condition that will end her life early. And now, with Hannah a funny, tough girl of fifteen, that time is coming.

Hannah's heart is literally broken - and she can't bear the idea of her dad's breaking too. So she resolves to find a partner for Tom, someone else to love, to fill the space beside him.

While all the time Tom plans a final day of magic that might just save them both. *Days of Wonder* is the stunning follow-up to Keith Stuart's much-loved debut *A Boy Made of Blocks* - and a book to fall in love with.

Days of Wonder Details

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Author : Keith Stuart

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From Reader Review Days of Wonder for online ebook

Sarah says

Full review to follow on the 4th of June as part of the blog tour.

Rosemary Standeven says

“There is such a thing as magic”. A great opening line. This is a book about magic. Not just the magic that you find in fairy tales and fantasy books, or even with comic book heroes – all of which get a mention. “I just mean the idea that incredible things are possible, and that they can be conjured into existence through will, effort and love.” This is the magic of stories, of people, of life and living.

The book alternates chapter between two narrators; Tom – devoted father, actor and theatre manager; and Hannah – daughter with serious heart condition. Hannah, like all seriously ill children, is a fully mature adult at age fifteen. The Days of Wonder begin with her fifth birthday, immediately following her diagnosis, when Tom gets his amateur dramatic group to create a faerie cavalcade outside Hannah’s window at night. Thereafter, every birthday comes with a newly produced (by Hannah and Tom) fairy tale acted out at the Willow Tree Theatre.

Hannah’s mother disappeared when she was three, but the theatre and its amateur dramatic group become her family. One of the strongest things about this book is its characters – not just Tom and Hannah – but all the theatre troupe get to play their parts. Everyone should have a Margaret in their lives. Someone with risqué anecdotes of their former life, that may or may not be true, but are always wonderful to hear, and who is always willing to listen, and to talk about any topic – including death – with a teenager (“It’s weird, but when we talk about life and more specifically its unavoidable conclusion, we do it as equals – we don’t bother to reassure each other. No one else in my life does that – they feel they have to protect me from any mention of death. Or more accurately, protect themselves.”). There is Ted, an accountant, who really wants to be a lion tamer. Actually, I made that bit up, but he does want to spice up his life by travelling around Europe in a classic motorcycle sidecar (with or without his wife). Natasha sees the theatre as her escape from the stifling demands of motherhood (“She told me that living in Somerset feels like being trapped in a cross between Groundhog Day and Deliverance. I looked up Deliverance on Google – I don’t think it was a compliment”). For Sally the theatre is somewhere she can finally get to use her organisational skills, and grow in confidence.

Outside of the theatre there is Callum, in whom Hannah has absolutely no interest at all. She might even believe that if she says it often enough. Like Hannah, Callum is seriously into comics. And like Hannah, he has his own health issues, as does her friend, Daisy (“Sometimes I forget she’s broken like me. While I’m hiding in the theatre or reading comics, she’s out drinking and shagging. She’s so much better at being chronically ill than I am”).

Hannah knows she “could drop dead at any second” and feels unable to plan for her own future. However, she does feel the need to plan for her father’s: “When you’re this sick, you learn really fast that you have to protect your parents”. With the connivance of Sally, Hannah starts to set up some blind dates for Tom – none of which go as planned.

I got so invested in the characters in this book, especially Hannah, and expected to lose her any time. I spent the first third of the book checking on how far through I was – 10% that means Hannah lives at least another 70%, 20% she has another 60% of the story to go ... And then suddenly I switched, and watched her LIVE. Soon after, Tom also realised that she had grown up, and that he needed to loosen the apron strings – just a little.

The story, then, got very emotional. Never saccharine. Just honest-to-goodness emotional. I started blubbing – happens very rarely, but I just could not help it.

The ending is just magical – that is, the ending of the current story. The epilogue ties up some loose ends, but isn't really needed.

This is a truly wonderful story, and I recommend it to anyone with a heart – broken or otherwise.

“This is what I've always understood about the theatre – it is a place of possibilities, of magic – it is not bound by the rules the rest of the world has to follow ... life always seeks to limit you, but it can't do that here. The world is as big as you want it to be and it lasts as long as memory”.

Warning: do not read this book in public, if you are in any way shape or form emotional!

I received this copy from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review

Monica Mac says

Oh my goodness, I LOVED this sensitively written, beautiful book!

Tom is the perfect dad - funny, empathetic and supportive of Hannah. Let's face it, fifteen is a tricky age and Hannah has a bit of the rebellious teenager in her too, even if most of the time she just doesn't have the energy to play up too much.

I loved the references sprinkled liberally throughout this book: to plays, playwrights, movies and comics. I also enjoyed the relationships that Tom and Hannah had with each other as well as with their close circle of friends, just wonderful.

Hard to categorise this book, actually. I found myself cheering both Hannah and Tom on and being totally enchanted by both of them. I thought it might be a bit of a tear jerker of a book but it wasn't really, there was too much good stuff going on!

5 big stars for this book, would give it more if I could.

Thank you to NetGalley and Little, Brown Book Group. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own.

Louise Wilson says

Tom, a single father to Hannah, is the manager of a tiny local theatre. On the same day each year, he and his cast of part-time actors have staged a fantastical production just for his little girl.

Hannah was diagnosed with a serious heart condition just before her fifth birthday. After her diagnosis, Tom, Hannah's father, gets his amateur dramatic group to create a faerie cavalcade outside Hannah's bedroom window. Now they hold a fairytale every day on the same date at the Willow Tree Theatre. Hannah's mother walked out on them when she was just three years old and her father has brought her up single handed ever since. Now aged fifteen, Hannah wants to find her father someone to love before her time runs out.

This story is told from Tom and Hannah's points of view. It's told mostly in the present but we do get some flashbacks to Hannah's past. The story does dip for a bit in the middle of this story. This is a very emotional read though there is humor in the crazy games and banter that Tom and Hannah share. I was pulled in from the beginning and apart from the dip in the middle, I loved this book.

I would like to thank NetGalley, Little Brown Book Group UK, and the author Keith Stuart for my ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Katy Noyes says

Life-affirming, warm and moving father-daughter tale with a touch of magic and a lot of heart.

I loved Stuart's first and unhesitatingly knew I'd want to read this, his next. While the story is rather different, the author still takes us on a journey with a sympathetic family, with unspoken issues and deep-seated worries. Instead of centring round a child with autism, the heart of Hannah's family is just that - Hannah's heart. Since childhood, she and her father have known that her condition is going to potentially shorten her life, but theatre manager Tom has always tried to fill his daughter's world with magic, fantasy and wonder: "I'd found this silly way to lighten the darkness, and it had worked" - Tom and Hannah take turns narrating and their dual perspective worked for me, I couldn't wait to see how each viewed the same scenes as the other had.

Now a teenager about to take exams and being forced to consider her 'future', Hannah is trying to face the likely reality of her situation ("He treats me like a precious little princess. But I am not Snow White any more. I am the godd@mn Snow Queen"), while Tom faces his own problems at his small theatre and doesn't take too kindly to Hannah trying to prepare him for a life without her...

It would be very hard not to fall for Hannah and Tom, such a loving father who has always gone the extra mile to make his daughter smile, and the literate Hannah with a witty and snide tongue who is facing fear head-on and not backing down.

And it's not just them - there are a whole series of stand-out minor characters with some fleshed-out backstories and who are just as memorable as the lead pair. An eccentric elderly actress, a date Tom meets, are just two that added secondary stories that I was just as invested in as Tom and Hannah's.

The story feels familiar in some of the turns, but doesn't conform to lazy writing. It's the sort of book you turn to for a lift, a warm glow and to meet old friends. This is material ripe for filming, a short series or a film, the characters will transfer well to this medium and there are juicy lines for many of the roles. I laughed openly several times, joyfully.

The author feels like a professional at influencing the reader's emotions, I just wanted to hand over my keys and follow his road towards the end... knowing what could be ahead. The ending was as poignant as I had been expecting, very beautifully concluded.

Just wonderful, a delicately finished story full of joy, loyalty, heartache and love.

With thanks to Netgalley for the advance reading copy.

Whispering Stories says

Book Reviewed by Stacey on www.whisperingstories.com

This is the story of Hannah, who just before her 5th birthday, was diagnosed with a serious heart condition called Cardiomyopathy. Now just before her 16th birthday she is seeing the effects on her body that the condition can cause. Tiredness, fainting, breathlessness, etc. The doctors don't know how long her heart will last.

Her single father Tom is the manager of the local theatre and every year for her birthday he has put on a show for his daughter to celebrate. However, the council is after closing the theatre down to make way for housing.

It's not just a building though, the theatre is part of both of their lives. It's how he kept going when all around him was crumbling apart. It's how the magic was kept alive inside of Hannah. It's where the extended family of actors and actresses gather. All who have been here for the pair of them for the last ten years.

This is also the story of a young girl with a rare illness coming to terms with her life and trying to live it to the full.

'Days of Wonder' is one of the most beautiful books that I have ever had the pleasure of reading. Keith Stuart's first book, 'A Boy Made of Blocks' was amazing and set the bar high. This second book has pushed that bar even higher. It is utterly captivating and if I could award it more than five stars I would.

The characters have all been written with such realistic qualities, not just our dual narrators, Tom and Hannah either who I adored, but every one of the vast array of secondary characters too. It doesn't feel like you are reading a fictional book, it feels like you are reading about real life events, written by real people, with such honesty.

The story is heartfelt and so poignant. It is funny and touching at the same time. It gets inside of you and becomes part of you. From the opening scene to the very last page, this book will play with your emotions. Now I'm not one to get teary-eyed, but the epilogue got me.

I can't stress how amazing this book is. Long after I had read that final word, I sat there just thinking about it. It is spectacular, and I truly believe that 2018's must-read novel has arrived.

Leona says

Having read and absolutely loving A Boy made of blocks, I was super excited to have the privilege to read and review this one. Whilst it started out really well I found it sagged a bit in the middle and it was lacking something. I can't exactly put my finger on it but to me the story was quite drawn out at times. A 3.5 star read for me

Kath Middleton says

This book really did make me wonder – how can Keith Stuart possibly follow *A Boy Made of Blocks*? Believe me, he can and he has! A story about a young girl with a life-limiting heart condition, brought up by her single father who runs a provincial theatre that's on its uppers, could have been so many things. It could have been depressing, or sentimental. It's neither. Hannah is an edgy, intelligent girl who, though haunted by her probably lack of future, though often scared, takes life by the horns and twists them. She's trying to fix her dad up with a woman 'for afterwards,' so he's not alone.

It's a story about the magic of stories. About not giving in, and believing in each other, and of course, about love. Both major characters are believable and funny. You feel their pain, you laugh with their joy. It's brilliantly done and backed up with a cast of lovely characters, each with their own troubles. I adore this book.

Colette Lamberth says

This book deserves a standing ovation.

When I read the blurb I thought this may be unbearably sad but in truth I found it uplifting. That's not to say there were no tears. Tom and Hannah are very likeable characters and you definitely feel the love between them. All the characters felt real and most had their own everyday issues to contend with. Collectively the theatre group showed what can be achieved when you have a common purpose. I need to mention Margaret too, she's definitely someone you would want to take afternoon tea with. There are some really funny almost slapstick moments and the entire book is just a joy to read. I loved it and highly recommend it and it's a solid five star rating.

Many thanks to Little, Brown book group for the copy of *Days of Wonder* received via NetGalley.

Kath says

I absolutely loved "A Boy Made of Blocks" when I read it a couple of years ago so I was beyond excited when I was invited to read this book. It's not out for a while and I usually read my review books close to their publication dates but I just had to start this one early as I was too excited and couldn't wait. I was also a little scared as I had very high expectations. Bear in mind that my main go to reads are crime fiction, the gorier the better so to say that this is not my usual cup of tea would be an understatement.

Well, what can I possibly say that can do this book justice? My words will never be enough to be able to get across the way this book affected me. Me, a bit of a hard nose cow, reduced to big sobbing tears at times by the powerful emotions I experience whilst read this book. Tears of pain, but also tears of joy, relief and, occasionally, tears of laughter. It's a magical tale that is beyond moving in content.

It's the story of a family; not all blood related I hasten to add. Tom is a single father to Hannah. A hard enough job I would imagine, having to pick up the pieces after Hannah's mother left them and bringing her up solo, but then Hannah starts to fall ill and is diagnosed with a serious heart condition. Determined to make her life as special as he can in the time they have left together, Tom recruits all his friends at the theatre where he works to help him make each and every birthday special for his little girl by staging a play for her

based mostly on the fairytales she loves. She soon starts to join in with the production process and the theatre and its people become a big part of her life too. But she is rapidly growing up and starting to find her own way in the world and her thoughts start to settle on what happens when she's gone. What will happen to her father? He has dedicated his life to her to the detriment of his own. Or so it seems to her. She thinks he has looked after her long enough and now it's her turn to look out for him.

It's told from the POVs of both Tom and Hannah in the present with some flashbacks to Hannah's past. I found this to be a very effective way of portraying the story told within and it was easy to follow as both characters have their own distinctive voice.

Oh. My, days. I'm not usually a very emotional reader but I think I invested my whole soul into this book. If I could have jumped in and joined the cast I would have. I made friends in this book. Friends that I am really going to miss. People that have made my life richer for their inclusion. People that have both challenged and changed the way I look at certain things. People that I grew to love, admire, argue with, fall out with, make up with, the whole shebang. In fact, I said to someone when I was about 80% though that I really didn't want to finish the book. Despite wanting and needing to know what happens, I was very reluctant to carry on, knowing that it would soon be all over and I would have to leave my new friends behind and go on without them.

I am not going to speak about any of the characters individually here as I really think they are best off met and got to know as the author intends them to be. Suffice to say that they are are brilliantly drawn and real, so very real. This author definitely has a big talent with regard to characterisation and character development.

Boy did I have a big book hangover when I finished.

Normally when I finish a book I go straight on to the next one. It is very rare (so rare I can't remember the last time) for me to not want to pick up another book and crack on. But I finished this one at about tea time Friday and couldn't pick up another one until about the same time the next day. I was spent, exhausted, emotional, affected by what I had read. I do have to just mention that although the book is quite heavy emotional wise, it never gets too heavy. It is very well balanced all told.

It's a book I feel very privileged to have read. It's a story which will stay with me for a while yet. It might also deserve a re-read in the future; another thing I very rarely do. It has also catapulted itself into my top five reads of all time. And I've read a lot of books... Mr Stuart, how are you possibly going to follow this? My thanks go to the Publisher and Netgalley for the chance to read this book.

Philomena Callan Cheekypee says

I read this authors previous book A Boy Made Of Blocks and loved it. I've got to admit I was t sure the author could write another to the level of the previous book but he did well with this story.

This story is told through two points of view- Tom and his daughter Hannah. When Hannah is four years old they find out she has a serious heart condition. This affects both their lives as her health on a daily basis isn't good. On each of her birthdays Tom puts on a show at the local theatre that he manages to celebrate. Unfortunately the council is threatening to close the theatre.

This is a brilliantly told heart felt story. Two great main characters with some superb secondary characters. I'm looking forward to seeing what the author writes next.

Audrey Gibson says

I loved A Boy Made of Blocks but this one blew my mind. Its the best book I've read this year so far and in my top 3 all time favourites.

I instantly connected to the characters, in particular Tom and Hannah. The love they had as father and daughter was perfectly written in my opinion. Their crazy games and banter was so funny and I laughed a lot throughout but their love and respect for each other shone through.

Margaret was another favourite character for me, I would love to have a friend like her. Even at her age she was hilarious, caring and a very special lady.

I've only been to the theatre a handful of times but this story makes me want go. The theatre staff were a family, they had their good times and bad times but were always there for each other no matter what.

The author is an amazing writer, he draws you in from the first page, makes you laugh and cry, sometimes he made me laugh then cry in just one sentence. He described the characters perfectly (I have images in my head of every one of them). I felt I was with them throughout their journey, in the same room with them listening to their conversations. I was inside their world.

This book will stay with me forever.

sue says

What an absolutely emotional, riveting and engrossing read.

This shows us how to be thankful in life no matter what life throws at us.

There are brighter moments that shine through.

Toms wife walked out on him and they're daughter while she was very young thus leaving him to manage as a one parent family.

Hannah his daughter seems to be struggling one day so off he took her for tests, the worse comes to light, Hannah has a rare heart problem that will only get worse.

Raising his daughter is not easy and as she gets older and weaker we see the roles reverse where she is worried about him and his future and how he will manage.

Its not all doom and gloom so don't be put off, this is the sweetest story of a daughter who loves and adores her father and a father who dotes on his daughter.

He manages the local theatre and each year with the help of the part time cast of actors they put on a lovely show for Hannah.

The wonders of the theatre are all around them, Hannah is now a little older and can see and appreciate what her father arranged each year.

Then the Council want to shut it down.

Hannah comes to the rescue as does others in the cast.

There's a lovely lady named Margaret within these pages, she was one of my favourite characters along with Hannah's troubled boyfriend.

I loved how this went full circle, it ends with his wife and his daughters offspring.

It's a lovely satisfying book that brought some laughter, some home truths, lots of moments of thankfulness and counting our blessings and making the most of what we have, who we have and enjoying life.

My thanks to Little, Brown Book Group UK and net galley for my copy

Bookread2day says

First of all I would like to thank the publisher for my proof copy. I enjoyed reading *A Boy Made of Blocks* and highly recommend it as it the story was inspired by Keith's real-life relationship with his autistic son. *Days of Wonder* is a story about a very sad family drama. When Hannah was four she started to complain about feeling tired. Tom, Hannah's dad did what most parents do, he took her to the doctors thinking that there's nothing to worry about. But Tom is shocked when the doctor refers Hannah to see the cardiology unit at North Somerset Hospital. I nearly cried to find out that she has a dilated cardiomyopathy. It's a disease that affects the wall of the heart, which means that the beat is irregular and blood isn't pumped very efficiently. Sometimes people die from it as they don't know that they have it. We are taken through the process of Hannah's condition and what treatment she has to have. There's a lot more involved within this well-written story.

Lauren Tess'x says

What a deeply moving, beautiful book. I didn't think Keith's novel *A boy made of blocks* could be topped, but he's done it.

Days of Wonder is a novel about love, life and magic and one in which Keith has again, provided us with a story based on his love of the theatre, he thought this would be an interesting and supportive place for his protagonist Hannah.

Tom, single father to Hannah, comes across as an overprotective father, he manages the local theatre where Hannah grows up.

During Hannah's early childhood, she is diagnosed with a heart condition which will end her life early – Dilated Cardiomyopathy which affects the walls of heart, her heart beat is irregular and the blood isn't pumped very efficiently.

On the same day every year (usually Hannah's birthday) Tom and the cast of Willow Tree theatre put on a production for Hannah.

In this moving book, Hannah and Tom have more than one fight on their hands, not just Hannah and her illness but the theatre is also threatened with closure. This book is told from both Tom and Hannah's perspectives. I got a lot from this book and I'm sure you all will too.

Will the theatre close? What will happen to Hannah? You can find out by purchasing the book from all good bookshops or via the link below:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Days-Wonder-...>
