



Going Away Shoes

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Jill McCorkle, a master of the short story whose work has been compared to that of Alice Munro and Lorrie Moore, is a writer whose characters insist on our immediate and total attention. Here, in her first collection in eight years, are eleven new stories bristling with her signature wit and weight. One way or the other, all of these stories are about women looking love in the face without flinching. Some of them are confronting the reality of domestic disruption; others are simply flirting with the possibilitiesâ€™ and dangersâ€™ of change. McCorkle's characters make mistakes but aren't interested in hiding behind them. They get divorced or quit their jobs or tell people to step aside, and they move on.

From the first story, about a modern-day Cinderella contemplating escape, to the last, "Me and Big Foot," an idyll about finding the perfect prince, McCorkleâ€™s collection is the genuine article, the work of a great storyteller who knows exactly howâ€™ and whyâ€™ to pair longing and laughter.

Going Away Shoes Details

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Author : Jill McCorkle

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Steph says

I can appreciate that this author is a good writer, but I just don't think books of short stories are my thing. These stories are fine, but because I only met the characters briefly, I just couldn't get invested enough.

Jenni says

I loved this. I liked some stories more than others, but I liked them all so much! What a wonderful collection of short stories. I can't wait to read more by her.

Gina says

Two stars is generous for how much I hated this book. Eleven short story collection of "women and love and complications therein"-should have known by the description on the back that the writing would be choppy. Stories were random. I knew within the first story I wasn't going to enjoy this, but I suffered through a few more before throwing down the book before reading the final two. No recommendation here.

Teresa says

I took a class with Jill McCorkle (at the past Tennessee Williams Fest just a couple months ago) before I really read anything by her, and I immediately fell in love with her as a teacher and a person -- she's got this great vibe about her. I got a chance to speak with her when I found her alone waiting to go into a panel on the last day of the Fest and she couldn't have been more gracious.

These stories remind me of something, yet it escapes me what that something is. And while they might not be the type of thing I usually read (another thing I can't quite put my finger on as to why), all the stories spoke to me at least a little bit (and a couple spoke to me so much it was almost spooky). There's humor, sadness and at least one small nugget of startling insight in each.

Some of the narrators were way too 'talky' for my tastes, but I did enjoy most of them. The story "Magic Words" is probably my favorite, esp in terms of the 'voice.'

Rebecca Elswick says

Brilliant! These stories are to be savored and read again and again.

Potassium says

This is a collection of short stories about a series of women across the country. As much as I usually love short stories, I was a bit unimpressed with this selection. The point of short stories, in my opinion, is to provide the reader with several in depth (but short) vignettes about various characters. I thought these stories were really boring because they skimmed the surface. All the women have something obviously wrong in their lives (divorced, cheating on their spouses, hate their kids, whatever) and it just seemed so unoriginal to me. I like stories with more of an interesting conflict. Plus this is a book of short stories... Not all of them had to be exactly the same! Anyway, my other biggest complaint was that all the stories seemed to just end. There was little to no resolution. They just ended. The only story that was okay was the last one.

Amy says

Short stories can be challenging reads. Too often I finish a short story and think “what does this mean” or I am longing for more story, or more character development. In Jill McCorkle I have found the perfect author of short stories. Her latest short story collection, *Going Away Shoes*, is quite simply delightful. Deftly combining wit and pathos, the stories in this collection superbly illustrate the various roles of women; single mother, daughter, sister, and second wife. McCorkle has a keen eye for human behavior and a succinct writing style that enables the reader to immediately feel intimacy with the characters in these stories. Some stories in this collection will make the reader cry, others will make them laugh out loud, but each will leave the reader deeply satisfied.

Ellen says

I really loved this. The epigraph is by Gloria Steinem ("If the shoe doesn't fit, must we change the foot?"), and every story in the book has a quiet feminist sensibility to it. I heard McCorkle read back in February, and I'm interested in reading more of her work.

Favorite quotes:

"This fear of nothingness is why many people stay put even when unhappy and disillusioned, daily sidestepping the problems and debris. It is why they ask the four questions again and again as they seek their own answer within. *No, but really, how are you?* Many choose comfort within the known boundaries--sticking with the Old World order as opposed to striking out for new lands and possibly falling off the edge of the earth" (57).

"She wanted to ask who had used him. She wanted to be the one who would make everything okay. It would be years before she realized what a dangerous position it was to be a self-appointed missionary even to those in need" (173-174).

"I wanted to say that even in my most ideal dream match I would still require a lot of solitary time with limited interruptions from friends and family" (251).

Donna says

The thing with short story collections is that unless you're familiar with the author, you have to be careful because you're not going to know what you're getting into. My favorite short story author is Flannery O'Connor. That woman can do no wrong with the short story. They're so dementedly elegant that you can't put them down. But she is only one of a very few whose short stories I like. The rest . . . meh.

This is one of the meh. I'd never heard of Jill McCorkle before I snagged this book at BEA but I knew it was pretty chicky just from the title. Usually I like some variety with my short stories. This one . . . not so much.

Every single story, save for one, sounds like it could have been the same woman telling the same story over and over again. I didn't see any stretch of the imagination, I didn't see any stretch of writing talent; I just saw a woman cranky with the world telling the same miserable story over and over and over again. Needless to say, I was bored and disheartened.

The only short that carried any weight, that pulled me in at all and invigorated me with the words was "Magic Words." The way it's written reminded me of Ellen Hopkins's book *Tricks*, where you have a bunch of different stories converging into one plot by the end. That's what this one did and while it had the same disparaging "I am woman in bad relationship" tone, it was meatier, it meant more. The voices varied and I actually believed in the talent I was reading.

Other than that, at the end of the day, I couldn't tell any of the other stories from the rest. I understand the overall theme of the book but it is possible to write different stories within that theme. Really. If you get your hands on this book, pick a story at random and read it. You won't need to read any of the others because they're all the same. But make sure you read "Magic Words," if nothing else. That one's the best out of all of them, by far.

Nicolemauerman says

Before starting this book of short stories I read the praise on the back (still have yet to see a book with horrible, yet true things on the back). The three reviewers raved about how funny and lighthearted these stories were. After reading *Going Away Shoes*, I am left scratching my head. Did I read the same book as the reviewers? Some of the stories were funny and others were down right depressing. I liked how the stories were connected through death, divorce, abandonment, but these topics are not funny.

One of the stories that left a lasting impression was "Another Dimension" about a woman's childhood. After her mother dies her father falls in love with someone completely different from her mother. I found the central characters in the story mean, vindictive, and spineless. Some of the other stories didn't leave a lasting impression, but there were some that I really did enjoy. The last story "Me and Big Foot" was about a woman who invents an imaginary lover. I found myself smiling through that story (also try "PS"-another funny one).

Synopsis: not a horrible read, fast very-short stories, women are the central characters. Some stories will make you smile, others will leave you depressed. I saw her other books were more popular, so I might give those a try.

Angela says

I've read this book several times over the past decade and am now at the point where I feel I can gain nothing more from it. There's a good amount of humour and poignant quotes, but ultimately the stories are a little too pedestrian and repetitive. Almost every story centres around a middle-aged lady who feels bitter over a broken familial relationship. The stories are well-written and offer a down-to-earth perspective on life, but none of the stories are remarkable enough to make it worthy of a spot on my shelf.

MB Shakespeare says

LOVED IT!

Stephanie says

The first couple of short stories were great but it doesn't stay that way.

Jennifer says

The strength of a short story collection is how many stories you remember afterwards. For me there were two stand outs "PS" and "Intervention." The author's writing is solid, though some times the subject matter seemed a bit repetitive with the well-to-do wife (middle aged or older) pondering her life post-divorce, during marriage, or otherwise.

One story had an interesting take from three different POVs (a young girl, a middle aged woman embarking on an affair, and an older woman) but still many of McCorkle's stories didn't stay with me. Her prose is solid and very steady. She's good with describing emotions and creating characters, but as I said after a while some melded together.

To date the best short story collection I've read is "Drinking Coffee Elsewhere" by ZZ Packer. But I'll continue on finding another that tickles my fancy as much.

Daffodil says

Liked 'Magic Words' the best.
