



## **Stones**

*Timothy Findley*

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In this collection of nine short stories Findley gives us a three-tiered look at life in the eighties as he explores the realities of contemporary relationships, offers imaginative visions of urban life, and examines the divisive and destructive acts played out on the personal battlegrounds of family life.

In Stones, Findley exposes the sharp changes in the traditional institutions of love, marriage, and family through a vivid terrain of images and insightful stories. Reflecting our changing times with stunning clarity, the tales reveal the menacing and enigmatic aspects of our daily lives.

## **Stones Details**

Date : Published 1988 by Viking (first published 1981)

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Author : Timothy Findley

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Genre : Short Stories, Fiction, Cultural, Canada, Literature, Canadian Literature, Literary Fiction, Anthologies, Collections

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## From Reader Review Stones for online ebook

### Nick Rudzicz says

1) "'Stella,' the doctor informed him, 'will not recover. Of course she will not recover. No one with half a brain can recover, Mister Bragg. Your daughter, I'm afraid, is doomed. I'm sorry.'

Before he left, the doctor turned at the door and said: 'You can come and see me any time you want -- but not today. I've just spent thirty-six hours on my feet and I'm going home, now, to die.'

He was gone.

Col said: 'what can I do for you?'

Bragg said: 'you can take me home and let me screw you to the wall.'

Later on, Bragg went into the ravine along Rosedale Valley Road and he walked in the mud. Coming to an open space, he found a fallen tree and he sat in the rain and he let the weather have its way."

2) "Three nights running, the corpse remained in its place and every time that Everett entered the dining-room in the nightmare he was certain he would find out who it was. On the fourth night, fully expecting to discover he himself was the victim, he beheld the face and saw it was a stranger.

*But there are no strangers in dreams; he knew that now after twenty years of practice. There are no strangers; there are only people in disguise.*"

3) "Looking down, she saw the words *BRIAN BASSET* written on the page before her and it occurred to her that without this person, the words were nothing more than extrapolations from the alphabet -- something fanciful we call a "name" in the hope that, one day, it will take on meaning.

She thought of Brian Bassett with his building blocks -- pushing the letters around on the floor and coming up with more acceptable arrangements: *TINA STERABBS...IAN BRETT BASS...BEST STAB the RAIN*: a sentence. He had known all along, of course, that *BRIAN BASSETT* wasn't what he wanted because it wasn't what he was. He had come here against his will, was held here against his better judgment, fought against his captors and finally escaped.

But where was here to Ian Brett Bass? Where was here to Tina Sterabbs? Like Brian Bassett, they had all been here in someone else's dreams, and had to wait for someone else to wake before they could make their getaway.

Slowly, Mimi uncapped her fountain pen and drew a firm, black line through Brian Bassett's name. *We dreamed him, she wrote, that's all. And then we let him go.*"

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### J says

Great short stories. I love "Dreams."

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### Amy Do says

Before "Stones", I've only known of Findley through my English teacher's introduction to "Headhunter", a huge book that I don't think I'd have the attention span for at this time of the year. So I thought the collection of short stories, "Stones", would be the perfect way to get a glimpse of Findley's work without going through an epic novel.

Findley's stories are filled with emotions and sympathy, overwhelming with such passionate love, hate, desire, sorrow, regret and pain. He explores relationships between husband and wife, between brothers, who make mistakes and hurt each other, who seem lost in their own life. In the end, the internal struggle within each character is what prevents them from reaching out to their loved ones. They all needed to overcome the fear and weakness to move on; but time runs out as the people they love pass away, and they are left even more lost and drowned in regret.

But Findley does all this with a voice so mature, calm and sympathetic that the stories become a beg for understanding from readers, rather than a blaming game. The pain depicted through each glass of beer or wine drunk, each forget-me-nots plucked, each letter sent transcends into a pain we can relate to. Suddenly Bragg, or Bud, Everett become part of ourselves: some sadness and regret that we've all gone through once or twice in our lives. I stopped considering myself as a third person reading about their mistakes, and instead join their souls in search of answers to the chaos and confusions in their lives.

I wouldn't have let Minna go if I were Bragg; but perhaps it was better to have let her go. Her departure left questions unanswered, and that could be the most painful part of losing her. Both of them would never know "what do people give each other after thirteen years", or how their child would have grown up having both parents, or even how many more people from Queen Street she could have helped and rescued. The impossibility to imagine these outcomes hurts more than anything because Bragg would have to spend the rest of his life wondering. The theme of letting go and forgiving others as well as oneself is described from the perspective of a character whose past holds many mistakes. And readers are left with a decision to either sympathize with him, or call him an idiot. But after all, he is not an idiot, for he has realized forgiveness may not be the solution: "Bragg well knew he need not be "forgiven", he knew that "forgiveness" in the given view could only be construed as a kind of arrogance." Can one ever seek full forgiveness?

And haunting dreams can make it even more difficult to find mercy. In "Dreams", elements of gore, mystery and horror act together to create a story of self-destruction and inability to let go. Perhaps the only force preventing forgiveness is the force from within the guilt. Surrounded by mental patients and their horrific life stories, Everett and Mimi struggle to sleep at night, a symbol for the internal struggle they go through everyday. Their passion of curing their patients draw them into a terrifying world of psychotic chaos. The story revolves around blood and death, the craziness and insanity, the reality and dream. The fusion between being awake and dreaming conveys a haunting question: can you dream another person's nightmare? The concept of dreaming reality and living a dream is not new (think about Avatar, Vanilla Sky, Alan Wake etc.), but have you ever thought of the idea of dreaming another person's life? "We dreamed him, that's all. And then we let him go." Everett's dreams, drenched in murderous blood, becomes the reality to Brian Bassett; this suggests a metaphor of a man suffering from another man's dream. Everett realizes that his effort to save a man's life might be the reason for his pain. The solution becomes apparent, although ridiculously sorrowful: Everett must stop dreaming; he must stop sleeping. The guilt increases with the vicious cycle that the character despondently traps himself in.

The same idea of a solution-less guilt and regret appears in "Real life writes real bad" and "The Name's the Same". With a calmer tone, Findley describes with all his sincerity and sympathy family relationships falling apart. The alcohol, ignorance and desperation makes it inevitable for people to fall apart from each other, through divorce, break-ups or simply death. Written with stunningly simple language, the stories ring an alarming message: how much time do we get to fix our problems before it's too late?

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## **Joyce says**

Timothy Findley was one of Canada's best writers. I'd read everything by him except this book of short stories "Stones" and it is pure Findley. I don't know another male author who can express emotion as he does and I think he was the sort of individual who felt everything twice as much as the next person. In fact he was overwhelmed by what life dishes up and drank to diffuse it. He was lucky to have found a partner who had a value for his brilliance and was willing to provide some degree of stability to his life. These are hard knocks stories and I take them to be biographical. Excellent writing.

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## **Sheila Heuvel-Collins says**

Minna and Bragg stories are my absolute favourite.

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## **Best says**

*Stones* is a collection of nine short stories dealing with issues in life. These stories are named Bragg And Minna, A Gift of Mercy, Foxes, The Skies, Dreams, The Name's The Same, Real Life Writes Real Bad, Almeyer's Mother, and Stones. Only 3 of which I enjoyed: *The Name's The Same*, *Real Life Writes Real Bad*, and best of all, *Stones*. The other six I found boring.

I guess the reason I don't like this book much is because I don't really like short stories. Anyhow, it's just a matter of taste. Maybe you'll get something out of it more than I did.

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## **Cody says**

findley's the man. cool tropes: being petrified of having children because you have visions of your wife birthing monsters; men and women returning from war physically intact but obliterated on the inside

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## **Kamloopy Book says**

Jean Crowe pick

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## **Tyler Jones says**

It has been fifteen years since I first read these short stories by Timothy Findley and I was surprised that they are even better than I remember them being. Findley displayed a far greater range of style here than he is given credit for. For some reason he is thought to only use realism, with emphasis on the interior lives of his characters, but here he seemed very comfortable writing plot driven stories that veered off into the macabre as well. Give the man his due. Reading this collection again makes me realize what a crucial role he

played in the maturation of Canadian Literature. Before Findley and other Canadian writers of the 1990's, Can-Lit was too self-conscious. It tried too hard to be liked. Findley was one of the ones who's only goal was to produce the best writing they were capable of and so wrote books that the whole world could admire.

My only negative comment is that the collection includes two pieces that seem to be fragments of an unfinished novel rather than short stories. "Filler" in other words. Very good pieces, but filler nonetheless - they lack the self-containment of a good short story.

Still, I would recommend without hesitation.

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### **Sandi Gallant says**

One of my favourites

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### **Danielle says**

I really enjoyed this collection. I felt that he managed to have a depth and broadness of narrative voice, situation and character while maintaining a similar ambiance/unspoken theme throughout the selections that united them.

This ambiance is subtle enough that it can't be harnessed with a single simple word or phrase, yet strong enough to be recognizable through most if not all of the stories. The most prominent features of this ambiance, in my opinion, would be loss, discovery, reconciliation with the past, the unexpected ways that relationships manifest over time and personal change - for the worse and for the better, though it is never directly stated for any character which way their changes fall. That distinction is left to the reader, and like any writer of the Chekhov school, Findley makes it difficult to lay easy absolution or guilt at any characters' feet through his use of compassionate, balanced story crafting.

I also felt that these stories have a timelessness about them, though several are obviously set within specific eras. There is a humanity there, and a constant sorrowful wit, that is undeniable and ageless.

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### **Ted says**

This collection is Findley at his finest. The short story Stones is truly a Canadian classic. A great introduction to the author or, for those only familiar with his later work when Findley's brilliance declined somewhat, a great opportunity to give him a second chance.

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### **Dani (The Pluviophile Writer) says**

Full review at The Pluviophile Reader: <http://wp.me/p3VFNP-7t>

4/5 stars.

Hardcover, 221 pages.

Read from December 08 to 13, 2014.

There were a lot of mixed reviews on this collaboration of short stories, especially from Findley fans, but as this is my first collaboration by Findley, I stand impressed. Stones is a novel about relationships and how the effect our lives, especially some of the harder aspects in life like death and loss. One thing I particularly enjoyed about this novel was how Findley wrote a few different stories on the same characters. What one short story lacked, the next one would pick up on, whether that was a plot detail or elaborating on a part of the character's personality or relationships.

This book has depth. I found myself thinking about the characters long after I put the book down. The book blurb on Goodreads mentions something about relationships and urban settings in the 1980's but I don't feel that any of these stories relate to a specific time frame but rather it's more about the context of relationships and how they change our lives.

"Bragg and Minna" is the name of the first story in the book and of the two main characters. Their story is one of the most potent. The story opens with how Minna has died and Bragg is going to pick up her ashes. Bragg is bisexual, potentially a homosexual, but he loves Minna. The two of them have their own quirks but that is what brought them together. The couple splits up shortly after they had children, one with severe mental disabilities. Bragg never wanted children but Minna came to a breaking point with the matter. After the birth of their mentally disabled daughter, Minna took the children and moved away Australia, which is where, years later, she dies. The story is filled with nostalgia and regret as Bragg makes the long trip over to claim her ashes.

The following story, "Gifts of Mercy", detail how Minna and Bragg met. This story makes the last one even more tragic.

From here, each story revolves around a new tragic character. From a professor inspecting a mask, a man suffering from PTSD as a result of WWII and the effects it has on his family, to a disturbing but fascinating read about a pair of married psychiatrists whose patient's dreams start to become a horrifying reality for one of them.

The stories are so different in tone. Some are tragic, some border on horror and others are more nostalgic but all of them revolve around the intrinsic relationships that we make in our daily lives. Overall a great compilation of short stories that I'd recommend to just about anyone.

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### **Daniel Kukwa says**

A few duds, buried in between TITANIC stories that will melt your brain. The tone of the stories manages to combine exotic imagery with familiar domesticity...something you don't experience very often.

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