



Little is Left to Tell

Steven Hendricks

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Scarcely able to see well-enough to read, Mr Fin nevertheless indulges in old familiar novels, classics that he can recompose from a bit of text.

As his connection to the world fades, old Mr Fin finds a measure of delight in the vividness of memories that crop up, especially the stories he used to invent for his long-lost son, David.

From the half-remembered bedtime stories and scenes from The Odyssey, The Old Man and the Sea, Don Quixote, work by Maurice Blanchot, Hart Crane, Mallarmé, and lines from Virginia Woolf, Mr Fin draws the materials he needs to approach the limits of his life.

But as the stories press upon him, the possibility that he might reconnect with his son leaves him isolated in his home, searching in books and in his and David's troubled past for some peace, some way to soothe the troubled characters of their broken world of stories.

The stories are overwhelming, multiplying and repeating patterns like a fugue: a family of rabbits, searching for a place to bury their eldest brother; a flying tree that carries our heroes but can't save them; a bear half-eaten by a colony of ants, searching for a book; zeppelins of iron and flesh that devour cities; the big-bad wolf—now domesticated as pulp-fiction writer Virginia the Wolf, finishing her last novel; Hart Crane, a rabbit who eats printed words and speaks in poetry; Orpheus and Eurydice, adventurers between the world of the living and the dead; Odysseus, hatching new plans after the horse has failed; an alphabet trapped in the mind of a goat-boy; a young wolf who must brave the path through the woods to her grandmother's house; fish-children, alone in an abandoned village, who must reinvent the world.

The title, Little is Left to Tell, is from Beckett's entr'acte, "Ohio Impromptu", an 11-minute play staged with two identical actors seated across from one another at a table. Only one speaks throughout the play, and only to read from a book. "Little is left to tell...", he begins, recounting a loss and a grief to the other, whose only action is to knock on the table when he wants a line repeated. Eventually, there is nothing left to repeat, and the end must arrive.

Little is Left to Tell Details

Date : Published October 7th 2014 by Starcherone Books (first published September 9th 2014)

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From Reader Review Little is Left to Tell for online ebook

Laura Reading says

I will be honest. This book will not appeal to everyone. That is a compliment.

I read an e-version but also enjoyed the audio sample and will listen to the whole book in the future. Do NOT listen while driving.

This is not a children's fantasy.

Beginning as lyrically peaceful as a Beatrix Potter fairytale, until the bombs drop. (on page two) It is a story of grief on multiple levels. A mother rabbit's loss, a father's repeated losses, of his son and his memories. Told in alternating time periods and viewpoints, are any of them "real?"

At some points it may be a challenge to focus and identify the events and where they fit in time, or if they fit at all. This is also part of the appeal of this book.

I did receive a copy for review purposes.

Alec Clayton says

This is a well written surrealistic, stream-of-consciousness, fantasmgorical adult Watership Down.

Daniel Brount says

With the appearance of talking rabbits and dropping bombs on the first page, Little is Left to Tell welcomes readers into a bewildering world of imaginative and lyrical storytelling. Steven Hendricks' debut novel dives deep into the mind of Mr. Fin, a man with dementia, who deals with the memory of his son David by hiding in the world of the stories he told his child.

Mr. Fin's dementia becomes clearer to the reader as he falls deeper and deeper into his stories, letting them envelop him mentally and emotionally. Hendricks takes a risk by sprinkling the novel with literary references ranging from the works of Homer to Hemingway, but he succeeds by inspiring the readers that know these pieces without alienating those who do not. As readers find themselves engrossed in the stories of rabbits and humans alike, this rich piece of literary fiction will remind them of the power of uninhibited imagination.

Read the full review at 100 Story Reviews.

Lyn *GLITTER VIKING* says

3.5 stars.

This isn't a feel-good tale of redemption, but an exhausted retrospect of how the world eats away at you until there is nothing left to give, to tell the world.

Cindy Roesel says

Steven Hendricks uses magical realism and the whimsical mood of fairy tales to his debut novel, *LITTLE IS LEFT TO TELL* (Starcherone). At the heart of the story is an old man named Mr Fin, who is suffering from dementia. I was immediately drawn into the narrative and I believe others will be too, since many of us have relatives who are suffering from either one or both of the horrific, incurable diseases of dementia and Alzheimer's.

Fin daydreams in the park and putters around an old boat. His neighbor, Viv looks in on him, but mostly Fin is in his head. We the readers are introduced to a rich menagerie of characters and animals inside his mind, including Mrs Rabbit and her bunnies, the writer, Virginia the Wolf. "Fin's tales are randomly copied from the writings of Cervantes, Hemingway and Virginia Woolf, sometimes (admittedly) lifted freely its inspirations sans quotation or citation."

It's twenty-years after wishing for his long-lost son, David, that Mr Fin is given a moment of lucidity and discovers David is dead. We readers assume he committed suicide.

LITTLE IS LEFT TO TELL is not an easy read. There were several times I was lost and had to go back and reread sections. I believe it would be helpful for any reader to have an expanded imagination and ability to follow non-sensible narratives.

Kelsye Nelson says

Read this book when you hunger for wonder, or if ever your very adult world seems a bit too dark and practical to suspend belief.

This book tells us many stories. I fell hard for Fin, a retired professor battling the twin losses of both his once organized and brilliant mind as well as the loss of his beloved son David. To cope, Fin retreats into stories once told, or perhaps simply dreamed, of rabbits and bears and flying trees and zeppelins called elephants that grind up entire cities in their mechanical bowels.

My favorite parts of this book were those that described to me this other world of Fin and David's imagining. I haven't lived in such a richly imagined second world since reading Dianne Wynne Jones' "Howl's Moving Castle". This book well-suits thinking adults seeking a little fantastical reverie.

Sara Strand says

I'll be honest. This book was so damn strange for me that I quit it around page 226 out of 366. I really tried.

The fact I got to this point is pretty amazing to myself because it was so bizarre and I feel like I don't have the education level to fully understand and appreciate the book. Here's what I can say: the writing itself is pretty great. The author has spent a lot of time piecing things together in ways that don't totally make sense, yet they do. Secondly, if you're capable and up for entering a totally bizarre, imaginative world- this is your book. I feel like I'm not really great at immersing myself into a story such as this, perhaps because I have so many distractions, but I really struggled. After giving up the book I decided to go and read some online reviews to see if I'm missing something huge at the end, something that would make me want to get there and I saw nothing. In fact some reviews are so bizarre that I honestly wondered if it was a normal, real person writing it. I'm such a fan of Alice in Wonderland that I thought this was going to be a retelling of sorts but no.. not so much. The writing is bizarre like Alice but I feel like I had a really hard time keeping up with the story and figuring out what was real and what was in Mr. Fin's head. But maybe that's the point? Maybe it's supposed to be strange and unclear, like that's an added element to the story? Hmm.

So overall, I didn't like it. I didn't even finish it because I felt like we were going nowhere and I've got over 100 books sitting here to read. Life is too short to force yourself to finish a mediocre book. Sorry, lambs.

Alexia561 says

To be honest, this was a tough read. While beautifully written, it felt disjointed and confusing to me and I struggled to finish.

The book starts off with the gentle tale of a rabbit family. Everything seems lovely...until the bombs drop. As the bunnies deal with the aftermath, Mr. Fin makes a sudden appearance in his garage, tinkering with his boat.

Huh?

What happened to the rabbits? Who is Mr. Fin? The sudden switch between stories and characters left me scratching my head and it took me a moment to catch on.

This story reminded me of a stream of consciousness novel that I once picked up and couldn't finish, but the tale of the rabbits kept me intrigued enough to keep going.

I'm not sure if it was because the story demanded too much concentration or that Fin's condition hit a little too close to home (my MIL had dementia), but reading this story was not the enjoyable escape I normally expect from a book.

While it's not exactly to my taste, I'm sure that other readers will be able to appreciate Fin's skewed remembrances of beloved stories. And as I mentioned earlier, the author does have a way with words. It was just a little too demanding for me and left me floundering.

Grady says

'The moon lays prone across my lap'

Washington author Steven Hendricks is a very bright and strange light in this his debut novel LITTLE IS LEFT TO TELL. Not that this is his first venture with the written word: he earned his MFA in Writing at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and subsequently his works have appeared in The Denver Quarterly, Web Conjunctions, Fold: The Reader, The Encyclopedia Project (Vol. 2), Sidebrow, and at XCP (archived at PennSound, 2005). His day job is teaching writing, literature, and book arts at Evergreen State College and he is a practicing bookbinder and letterpress printer as well. His artists' book work, "Breathing Machine," appears in Lark Books' anthology 500 Handmade Books: Inspiring Interpretations of a Timeless Form. He has shown artist book works in galleries across the Pacific Northwest, in Olympia, Portland, and Seattle. His current book arts project is a printing of fragments of Mallarmé's writing about women's fashion in the visual form of his *Un coup de Dés*.

A practiced hand, this, but stepping away for a moment from paying homage to his skill as a scribe, it is his head overflowing with rich imagination that sets his debut novel apart from anything before us today. It may be the artistic influence of his other pastimes that influences this near stream of conscious style of fabricating incredible characters, but for this reviewer it seems there is much more to Steven Hendricks than simply style and originality. Read this book and feel the connect between the demented mind and the world as we are commandeered to interpret it. His trail of tales is the fabrication of the retired professor Mr. Fin who suffers from dementia, possibly due in part to genetics but also a response of his son and his bleaching memory of the brilliant mind he once owned. Mr. Fin deals with this status of time and mind by retreating into bedtime stories once told, or perhaps simply dreamed, for his lost son, tales of rabbits and bears and flying trees and zeppelins called elephants that grind up entire cities in their mechanical bowels. 'Virginia the Wolf writes her last novel to lure her daughter home. A rabbit named Hart Crane must eat words to speak, while passing zeppelins drop bombs. Mr. Fin tries to read the past in marginalia and to rebuild his son from boat parts. The haunting fables trace the fictions that make and unmake us.'

Suffice it to say that Steven Hendricks is a contemporary conjurer, one who returns to us the magic of stories that seem so real in their bizarre way that they make us feel held, loved. And this is likely the reason the book is so touching - a fragile mind attempts to reconstruct his deceased son with this journey into the strange. It is a wondrous book.

Becky says

So yes, many of the characters in Hendricks's debut are animals. And at least a few of those animals are named after famous literary figures. Their stories, too, take inspiration from their namesakes. And yet, I'm not familiar enough with those figures to catch all of the references. Instead, it was the author's acknowledgements that lit that lightbulb for me.

I'd thought this was a book that I would quite love but perhaps the above mentioned lack of literary clout in my past reading was in part to blame. Not that I think the author went about creating a book that wouldn't be accessible for those who hadn't read Woolf, Crane, and others. But I think it would certainly have made it more enjoyable for me. It would have made me "get" what I was reading.

The animals do lend a bit of a fable feel to Little is Left to Tell, an element I did quite enjoy. It does, as the Kirkus review acknowledges, lighten what is in reality a much darker story. It won't be everyone's cup of tea but I think for the right reader Little is Left To Tell will be a quite moving tale. As for me, it was a struggle but in the end I muddled through. Now it's on to the next thing.

