



## When There's Nowhere Else to Run

*Murray Middleton*

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## **When There's Nowhere Else to Run** Murray Middleton

In one way or another, isn't everyone on the run?

A survivor of Victoria's Black Saturday bushfires takes asylum with old friends in the Dandenong Ranges. An editor-in-chief drives his sister halfway around the country to an east-coast rehabilitation clinic. A single mother flies to Perth with her autistic son for one last holiday. A father at the end of his tether tries to survive the chaos of the Sydney Royal Easter Show. A group of young friends hire a luxury beach house in the final weeks of one of their lives. A postman hits a pedestrian and drives off into the night.

When There's Nowhere Else to Run is a collection of stories about people who find their lives unravelling. They are teachers, lawyers, nurses, firemen, chefs, gamblers, war veterans, hard drinkers, adulterers, widows and romantics. Seeking refuge all across the country, from the wheat belt of Western Australia, the limestone desert of South Australia, the sugarcane towns of Queensland, the hinterland of New South Wales to the coastline of Victoria, they discover that no matter how many thousands of kilometres they put between themselves and their transgressions, sometimes there's nowhere else to run.

'Masterfully controlled, lingers long in the memory.' Rohan Wilson, author of *The Roving Party* and *To Name Those Lost*

'Assured, witty and wise.' Stephen Romei, Literary Editor, *The Australian*

'Vivid and compelling.' Jenny Barry, BooksPlus

## **When There's Nowhere Else to Run Details**

Date : Published April 20th 2015 by Allen & Unwin

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Author : Murray Middleton

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## From Reader Review When There's Nowhere Else to Run for online ebook

### Ann Tonks says

I'm not particularly fond of short stories. I seem to need more words and more ideas to get into characters. This collection has certainly garnered a range of reviews and I agree (to some degree) with most of them. There's the sameness of tone that is both a strength and a weakness. There is a wonderful array of places but often the reader is required to bring their knowledge of the place to play. There are some moving stories and some ho hum ones.

But for all my ambivalence, I'm glad I read them.

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### Emmy9394 says

Emotional and beautifully written, each short story is a simple yet stunning read. My favourite was the title story - a group of young friends rent a beach house to celebrate the last weeks of one of their party's life. Totally devastating, Middleton has captured the humanity in grief and desperation in each of the stories. Brilliant.

For my full review, visit my blog: <https://emilythebookaddict.wordpress....>

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### Jodie Warner says

I'm giving this a 3.5 and like others, am finding it hard to rate. He writes honestly, yet simply and the stories were interesting, but not captivating. Middleton's stories are quintessentially Australian. Honest, sound and good.

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### Sharmayne says

Just devoured this book. No wonder he won the Vogel Literary Award.

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### S.C. Karakaltsas says

I found it difficult to get into the first couple of stories but warmed to the style of this author. The stories set a mood that I enjoyed and was sorry to finish when I read the last story of the book.

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### Boy Blue says

"It got me thinking that seeing death in the faces of the living might be scarier than seeing an open casket."

"For all of the effort we made, what Raymond seemed to like the most of all was sitting out on the porch in the morning, eating his raisin toast."

The stories are good reads. For many people they will seem very familiar.

However, I couldn't help compare this to Tim Winton's *The Turning* (especially with the reference to Cloudstreet in *Jubilee Mile*) and it seems to come up a bit short. It has a similar sort of ambition with a slightly different target, Middleton looks at more of an urban elite than Winton's rural crew. While Middleton may often displace his characters from their urban jungle there's no doubt they are city slickers. This is compounded by the way Middleton's characters seemed to be defined more by their class and the stereotypical values associated with that rather than anything that makes them unique. The stories function almost exactly as you would expect with just a faint absurdist touch. In contrast Winton's characters are defined by their own unique characteristics, they feel like real people not cardboard cutouts.

Middleton's prose is easy to read and written in very much the modern Australian vernacular. In saying this there are few sentences that take your breath away in the way Winton's sentences do. Middleton's prose lacks Winton's lyricism and presents itself as more clinical and even more business like.

I could see certain people loving Middleton's work because they subconsciously recognise their own trials and tribulations in the stories or similarities with people they know. I can also see certain people hating his work because of the way it at times feels like both an apology and celebration of the trivial "first world problems" of the self-obsessed urban elite.

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### **Anne says**

A fabulous collection of short stories and a very worthy winner of this year's Vogel Literary Award.

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### **Lisa says**

I usually try to keep up with the Vogel Prize, because it's been a great predictor of fine writing over the years, with winners like Tim Winton, Kate Grenville, Gillian Mears and Brian Castro, and more recently Christine Piper (*After Darkness*) and Rohan Wilson (*The Roving Party*) amongst others. This year, however, the award takes me out of my comfort zone because it was awarded for only the second time ever, to a collection of short stories (and as you all know, I prefer my fiction in the form of the novel).

As it happens, reading the winning collection, Murray Middleton's *When There's Nowhere Else to Run* coincides with reading a collection called *Family Room* by Indonesian author Lily Yulianti Farid - because I'm going to be 'in conversation' with Lily at the Bendigo Writers' Festival in August. The contrast between these two collections couldn't be greater, because (as you will see when I finish reading Lily's book and write my review) she is wrestling with the remarkable social and political changes of the post-Suharto era while also interrogating feminist issues in a patriarchal society. The quiet, reflective tone of Middleton's book seems to lack passion and energy by comparison but that may be the appeal for some readers.

And yet, it's an interesting collection. In settings from Perth to the eastern seaboard, his stories focus on people whose lives are falling apart. It's a pessimistic view of the world because these people all seem to be

trapped by their circumstances, with 'nowhere else to run'. One which tore at my heartstrings was 'Mainstream', in which the mother of an autistic son has had enough and wants to offload the stress of caring for a child with a disability. Another that indirectly gives voice to a traumatised survivor of the Black Saturday bushfires is a poignant study of an adolescent's struggle to empathise because he is preoccupied with the normal life of a teenager (and especially his first girlfriend) and – as you'd expect with a boy of his age - he's out of his depth in dealing with grief and trauma.

*I sometimes heard Mum and Dad talking about Raymond in their bedroom at night. They never argued. I could tell they were talking about him because their conversations were in a different pitch than usual. It was a strange thing. When I heard them talking, I realised how little trouble I must have given them over the years.*

*I couldn't say whether Raymond overheard their conversations from the study, or if he did, whether he cared. I figured that our aim was to help him feel normal again. I had no idea what constituted 'normal'. Before I met Courtney, I thought that I was painfully normal. I wondered whether Raymond had been normal before he moved to Marysville, with all that sugar swimming through his veins. All I concluded was that once the state was lost, whatever it was, it probably became impossible to find again.*

*Mum and Dad did their best to keep Raymond away from the papers in case something about the Royal Commission popped up. They didn't mind me leaving the sports section on the table. (p. 7)*

To read the rest of my review please visit <http://anzlitlovers.com/2015/07/15/wh...>

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### **Kylie Peel says**

Excellent short stories!! Can't wait til he writes another book!!!

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### **Corrina says**

So hard to rate. When short stories are good, they're so bloody good. Some gloriously full yet sparse loveliness in here...seriously wonderful. Not all killers though.

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### **Jesse Coulter says**

Deserving of the Vogel Award. Middleton has a great ability to get under the skin of "normal" Australian life and examine the raw pain and doubt that everyone experiences. The stories vary enough in tone, mostly via the age/gender/social mobility of the central character(s), to keep them more than interesting and look at different facets of the human condition. My personal favourite was "Burnt Hill Farm", which looks through the eyes of several members of a family group as they grow up and fall out via their yearly group holiday.

Simple, compassionate, powerful.

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## **Peter Dickerson says**

Murray Middleton's #VogelsAward winning collection of short stories consists of sad and "real" stories about life, families and relationships in the Australian suburbs.

Everyone in these stories seems a bit impoverished and relatively unhappy. Life seems to be a struggle. No one seems to be really doing much with themselves.

The characters are interesting, there is no unpleasantness, the stories are about life and how it progresses, and how the characters and even ourselves interact with each other.

Some of the stories are brutally sad and seem real.

I do think that the story Burnt Hill Farm is fascinating.

Jubilee Mile is beautifully written and the characters are vividly described.

The Fields of Early Sorrow is a graphic look at mental illness and how we may deal with it. The desolation in the collection in general, but in particular with this story and Hinterland is really interesting. The stories are bleak and grey. We can empathise with the characters and feel part of what they are enduring.

The collection is really interesting reading. The Australian urban landscape setting, and the general character of the stories, adds a great dimension to them which I really enjoyed. When There's Nowhere Else to Run was deserving of the #VogelsAward which I heard about on ABC News Breakfast just after it was announced.

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## **Caitlin says**

Giving up on this one before it takes away more of my life. Truly horrible writing. Certain sentences wouldn't be out of place in a 50 shades novel. Just dull dull dull. All the stories read the same, rely too heavily on nostalgia and name-dropping, the characters are voiceless, and there's too much pointless exposition. Clearly targeted at upper middle class white people with no lives, who seem to be the only ones buying books in Australia, so unfortunately that means publishers will keep churning out this uninspiring nothingness under the label of literature.

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## **Kirsten says**

What a perplexing collection of stories. Some were outstanding, beautifully composed with a perfect sense of place. A few of the others reminded me of some of the stories I wrote at uni which, to be quite frank, were rubbish.

The homage to Tim Winton (clearly an influence) in Jubilee Mile was a nice touch.

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## George says

most of these stories received 2 or 3 star ratings from me. I appreciated how the author tried to bring some diversity into the stories but overall it felt very male dominated especially with all the sports and betting references. female characters felt very 2 dimensional (as did some of the male characters). Overall I just don't think this author is for me.

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