



## **Stones**

*Polly Johnson*

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# Stones

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## Stones Polly Johnson

Coo is trying to cope with the hand that life has dealt her. At sixteen, she feels she's too young to have lost her older brother, Sam, to alcoholism. She's skipping school to avoid the sympathy and questions of her friends and teachers, and shunning her parents, angry that they failed to protect her, and desperate to avoid having to face the fact that, towards the end, she began to wish Sam would leave forever – even die. Then, one day, truanting by the Brighton seafront, Coo meets Banks, a homeless alcoholic and she's surprised to discover that it is possible for her life to get more complicated. Despite warnings from her friends and family, Coo and Banks develop an unlikely friendship. Brought together through a series of unexpected events, strange midnight feasts, a near drowning and the unravelling of secrets, together they seek their chance for redemption. That is, until Coo's feelings start getting dangerously out of hand.

## Stones Details

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Author : Polly Johnson

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## From Reader Review Stones for online ebook

### Jennifer says

I received this book on Net Galley in exchange for an honest. The thoughts and opinions are my own.

This is not the typical book that I go for, but after reading the description I figured it was a book I would like to read, because it felt like a very honest book.

Minor spoilers ahead.

Coo is a girl who is dealing with a lot of family/parental issues, her brother an alcoholic recently died, and she is having a lot of issues with the death, namely the fact that her parents did not protect her in very violent situations.

In fact, she is glad he is dead, and she worried that people will think less of her because of this.

I however did not think less of her. I felt this was a legit emotion. I also liked that the character was written in a way that is "flawed". Having friends that have been very similar circumstances, I felt the emotions that were reflected in Coo's story were true and what most people feel in these circumstances. Someone is violent and terrorizes you, dies. You are probably happy & relieved. Yes it was her brother, but sometimes that makes the situation worse.

She starts an unlikely friendship with a tramp (homeless person) and feels that she can be honest with him, and that he is someone she can be friends with. Strange thing is he is drunk. The one thing she despises. This friendship quickly develops. The only thing I wish... is we would have found out how old he was, we never find this out... we know he is at least 20. She is 16. Don't worry, it doesn't turn into something... bad. I felt I needed to say that, because I know a lot of people would be disgusted (myself included) if it progressed into more than a friendship.

I can not have enough things to say about this book. The book was well written, and flowed nicely. I felt the relationships she had with different people were fleshed out nicely and again true and honest.

This book made me wonder if I would have felt the same was a Coo if I had similar circumstance.

This book, had a bit of a mystery back drop to it, because someone is killing people, and she Coo keeps saying she killed her brother. You find out why she says that at the end of the book....

I say give this read a go. It is moderately paced and it is something you can enjoy all at once or in small doses. It plays with all emotions. Especially the emotions associated with death.

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### Natalie says

*I received this book through net-galley in exchange for an honest review.*

DNF AT 53%....

I really hate DNF books I try to avoid doing this but I really could not get into this book. I had tried for months to finish this but it was just not going to happen sadly.

I really was excited for this book, it is all about the issues surrounding a family dealing with the loss of their

son. Who happened to be an alcoholic. I liked how this book was more to do with the after effects, and fall out of dealing with the loss of someone who was a severe alcoholic. This is a realistic look into how alcoholism effects everyone, surrounding the alcoholic as well as themselves. I had personal reasons for wanting to read this:

1.I haven't seen any YA books surrounding this issue that are this realistic and sadly quite real. So that was very refreshing to see as this issue does effect a lot of teenagers today.

2.I have myself personally dealt with this issue with a family member,in my own family and have seen the fall out. To be honest this book hits the issue right on the head. The book was very bang on, with how bad it can get for everyone.

So yes the book was very good in the sense that it is very well researched and real. I could relate to a lot in this book.

Surprisingly though I could not connect with any of the character's. This book felt very clinical and I was just losing interest.

If this book had been more personal with the bang on well researched look into alcoholism. This would have been amazing but I do appreciate that Polly Johnson took an issue that needs to be discussed more.

The writing was well wrote and I liked the touches of the diary, entries just needed to be more personal.

Overall could have been amazing If this had been not so clinical but the issue is very well researched and is very real.

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## **Bookish Indulgences with b00k r3vi3ws says**

<http://www.b00kr3vi3ws.in/2014/06/Sto...>

Coo is a sixteen year old girl, who spends more time at the beach than in a class. Her emotions are in turmoil as her elder brother, a drunk, is dead. She feels guilty for wanting him to be dead most of the times and for not missing him enough. She finds an unlikely friend in Banks, a homeless man, who is a drunkard too. An unlikely relationship of formed and even though Banks is not an ideal person to talk to, he is the only one Coo can talk to.

Nothing about this book is traditional. I mean the protagonist is called "Coo"!! The story doesn't involve a teenager throwing typical temper tantrums or is it a happily ever after sort of a love story. Instead it is about the journey of one girl who has taken her brother's death in a bad way. Coo has some of that typical teenager angst about her but mostly I found her to be different from typical YA Heroines. She is strong in her own way and impressionable in her own way too. I loved her for that. The subject matter and the content matter is not light either and may not be made for everyone. The author's narrates the story in a brisk manner that lets us get close to Coo and Banks Just enough instead of getting too familiar with them.

This book struck a chord with me. I felt and wished throughout the book. This is an odd book with a depressing ending, yet I liked it!

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## **Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says**

Stones is a powerfully emotional story that brings many surprises with it along the way. With a range of feelings I read and enjoyed this book, although at times disturbed and concerned at the same time. Not a light hearted novel but one that tackles important issues in a dynamic way.

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## What's the book about?

*Coo is trying to cope with the hand that life has dealt her. At sixteen, she feels she's too young to have lost her older brother, Sam, to alcoholism. She's skipping school to avoid the sympathy and questions of her friends and teachers, and shunning her parents, angry that they failed to protect her, and desperate to avoid having to face the fact that, towards the end, she began to wish Sam would leave forever – even die. Then, one day, truanting by the Brighton seafront, Coo meets Banks, a homeless alcoholic and she's surprised to discover that it is possible for her life to get more complicated.*

*Despite warnings from her friends and family, Coo and Banks develop an unlikely friendship. Brought together through a series of unexpected events, strange midnight feasts, a near drowning and the unravelling of secrets, together they seek their chance for redemption. That is, until Coo's feelings start getting dangerously out of hand.*

## My Review:

Coo (Corinne) is a struggling teenager, she's invisible in her own mind and literally in her home to her two parents who are lost in their grieving over the death of her brother Sam. It's the same at school, she is not noticed, she has intense war going on in her own emotions around the death of her brother, relief, guilt, anger all at once. She feels nobody will understand.

Her older brother was a violent and irrational alcoholic and his alcoholism hit the family hard and tore it apart when he was alive, Coo was afraid of her brother and I don't blame her. Alcoholism is horrifically unpredictable to live with and alcoholics only care about one person - themselves.

One day whilst walking alone Coo strikes up conversation with a homeless man called Banks. Banks offers her a landing place where she can talk and be herself, he drinks as do his crazy friends that are around him. One in particular that takes a massive disliking to Coo. She begins to hang around Banks in this new world of homelessness, sharing drinks with him, being torn by the way she feels about him as her friend and confidante also.

Everyone around Coo are terribly concerned about her increasing connection with Banks. Her few friends she has, her parents, the police, Coo can't see what the problem is, even if she is drinking cheap Vodka with him for the first time and getting drunk when she's never been interested before. She sees something in Banks that she needs. She needs to understand things. She needs to understand herself also.

The book is not a fast paced read, it takes us into Coo's life, the good, the bad and the ugly. She is at times making rash and dangerous decisions, in part perhaps to get someone to notice her and care for her, she is lost in invisibility to those who should be caring for her. She's a great character, somewhat naive but worldly at times also. I felt her pain and her rage, I felt her loneliness and desperation. The author did great in portraying this young teenager dealing with a complex and painful life situation.

**Banks was also an interesting and well written character, I was constantly watching him as I read to see what he was getting up to next, could I trust him? Could Coo trust him? Should we let our guard down? Like many homeless people, Banks had a life before being homeless, a family and a job. I like the way the author made sure the reader knew this in her writing as I don't think many people think about that when they look at a dirty, drunken homeless person. They are people too after all.**

The book tackles alcoholism from two angles, both are equally ugly in their impact on people. Nobody surrounded by Alcoholics are happy people, it's a walk on eggshells game and it's not much fun, it's a serious and powerful message.

At the same time as Coo's relationship with Banks is changing and developing so are her other relationships, she develops new friendships, some of them bringing more angst and pain. Others bringing a much needed sense of belonging. When the police start looking for a man who is attacking young people in her town Coo is not concerned, until one of her friends, Raven is a victim of the attacker. "He smelt bad" Raven remembers.

With Coo's relationship with Banks developing more it reaches a crisis point and the lead up to the ending of the book had me on the edge of my seat as all of her world's start to intersect and crash together to create turmoil and darkness. What the author does is lead you by the hand, then you get slapped around the face a few times with some scenes in this book. It's an eye-opener. It's not pretty, but I am glad to say some amazingly good stuff comes out of it all.

**I enjoyed this book, if you enjoy a book that tackles deep family issues, issues in society and has excellent characters and a strong message with a touch of human emotions thrown in, you will like Stones.**

Goodreads actual rating: 3.5 stars.

*I received a copy of this novel thanks to the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.*

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### **Kerri (Book Hoarder) says**

What an interesting, melancholy little book this is.

This book was difficult to read in ways. Some books are like that, because they take the reality of humanity and reflect it back to us, and that's not always a pleasant image. This book is one of those, and that makes for heavier reading than I was actually expecting, going into this.

The sort of things that go on in this book are heavy enough as adults, and the fact that this book deals with a teenager makes it all the more depressing, but incredibly realistic. It tells the story of Coo, an withdrawn, angry-at-the-world sixteen year old who resents everything that she's been put through, and both misses and hates her older brother Sam, who was swallowed by alcoholism.

The book drew me in right away, a testimony to the writing. To be honest, there are a lot of ways in which Coo isn't particularly likeable. She's withdrawn, she's a bit self-centered and selfish, she pushes away any overtures of emotion from her parents, and she makes a lot of stupid decisions throughout the book. In many ways the book is telling the story of her rebellion and recovery as she grows up.

Beneath all of that is a raw vulnerability, though, and that will get me every time. It's not easy being a teenager, with all its pitfalls and experiences - but you throw in addiction and death and suddenly its all the more treacherous. That's where the true raw beauty of this book comes through, a tale of grief and anger and growing up, testing the boundaries and learning to move on.

The relationship that Coo has with Banks is one that was morbidly fascinating and compelling. At times I wanted to shake her and other times my heart ached for her, and that's the truth of it, right there, and I think it relates well to the overall story of addiction the book is touching on. Addiction takes a person and makes your heart hurt for them even as you want them to snap out of it, and it's not necessarily an easy journey as we follow Coo through the book and see her experience everything that comes with having a friend like Banks.

I think my biggest complaint was probably the abruptness of the ending. So much tension builds up over the course of the novel, and when I got to the end I was so surprised that there wasn't more - more of an unpacking of Coo's thoughts, what she'd learned and how she felt after certain events. It's not a book where everything is intended to be tied up in a pretty bow, by any means, but I think it would have benefited from a more satisfactory conclusion, more depth and exploration of how Coo was feeling. That would have taken it over the edge from being an interesting, good book to a very good or even excellent one.

*Disclosure: I received a copy of this book through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.*

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## **Erica says**

Alright, so I finished this a few minutes but I believe that's when I speak best in a way. Overall, I really really enjoyed this book. It wasn't like any kind of novel I've read before. While it took me a second, I figured out that the story was told from Britain which was really cool. I felt like I got a kind of inside look into more British culture. The way language was in this story was vital and very accurate in telling different points of view of characters.

I thoroughly enjoyed trying to figure out how things pieces together and how things happened. But with this, I was really hoping there would be more resolution to some out standing issues in the story. It definitely didn't take away from my love of this story, but I would LOVE to see more into Coo's future/past and Bank's future/past. I just really enjoyed Bank and wish to read more with him in it.

The characters were outstanding and different from any other characters I've read before. The main character, Coo, was so wise beyond her years. She was mature but youthful at the same time. Banks was probably my favorite character. He was so lovely to read and hear from. His character is so dynamic that you are bound to be surprised by him. Pointing out a detail, you don't really get a clear idea as to how old Banks actually was. At first this bothered me, but then it allowed me to really guess on my own and play out his future in my head.

All of these characters really possessed beautiful traits like loyalty, honor, hopefulness, enthusiasm, and support.

Without going into much detail, I really think anyone could enjoy this book. One thing to note, I would definitely recommend this book to an older audience so maybe 16 and up. Just because it does deal with issues about drinking which I guess you know about younger, but it definitely took a more serious approach to the issue. But saying that, I thought this book was the perfect combination of serious, and innocent adolescence.

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## **Ashley says**

This is not the typical book that I read. However, after reading the blurb for it I thought it would be a good read. Stones was an amazing and emotional read for me. It portrays a very honest description of what a young girl with an alcoholic brother could possibly go through. Coo is a sixteen year old girl with her own unique flaws and feelings. After her brother dies she's disconnected from her family, friends, and the life she led before. She feels glad that her brother died and hopes no one finds out and thinks less of her because of it. I don't fault her for feeling this way. I think it adds more to the character the author is portraying. Coo is trying to move forward and understand the how and why's of her new world. She makes new friends and not all of them good. Coo really grows up in this book and makes peace with what happened with her brother and learns to move forward. Stones is a roller coaster ride of emotions that can leave you frustrated and even

teary eyed. Polly Johnson crafted an emotional fast paced read with a little mystery throw in. I cannot wait to see what she comes up with next.

I was given a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Stacie says**

I received this book from NetGalley in exchange for a review. Stones centers around a teenage girl named Coo and her family who are dealing with life after the death of Coo's brother Sam. Everyone is angry and sad but no one is talking about it. Coo wanders around town aimlessly, going to school when and if she feels like it while her parents seem to parent when they want to. Eventually Coo makes friends who all end up hurting her in one or the other. She is especially drawn to a homeless alcoholic named Banks who she strikes up a friendship with that goes down a path that Coo has trouble coming back from. This was yet another in a long line of books written and set in England. While I have no idea what it is like to lose a child, I feel like Sam's death was too much a part of the story and then not enough all at the same time. The dynamics of the family were weird and I felt like there were too many plot strings dangled in front of the readers faced that were never really explored further. I can handle a little ambiguity in a book but this one just left too many unanswered questions for my liking.

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### **Marjolein says**

2.5 Stars

Full review to come!

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### **Diane S ? says**

There are not many things I claim to be an authority on or in but the high price that excess alcohol in a family can cost, is one of them This is a Ya targeted book, a book about a young girl whose brother, an alcoholic has died, and the many changes to the family and herself that she has to work through. I understood so many of her thoughts and actions and became quite consumed by this book wondering how she was going to work everything out. I understood her bitterness, her lack of connection and many of the things she did. There was a back story, of young women being attacked that I felt was just there, not really explored, though by the end of the book I understood more why it was there. Loved that the ending is somewhat open, it just seemed right that it was open to interpretation and left room for hope. A thought provoking book, with a wonderful and searching young girl that the reader will find themselves rooting for.

ARC from NetGalley.

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### **Sarah says**

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to HarperCollins UK, Digital and Netgalley.)

16-year-old Coo is struggling to come to terms with the death of her alcoholic older brother, and spends more time walking Brighton beach than attending school.

When a homeless man called Banks saves her from another homeless man who claims he has a message from God for her, she strikes up a friendship with him, even though he too is a drunk.

Why does Coo feel so guilty over her brother's death? And is Banks really the person she should be talking to?

This was quite an emotional read about a girl dealing with the death of her brother.

Coo was a bit of a mixed up teen. She felt guilt over her brother's death, partly because she wanted him to die at times, and then felt guilty that she didn't miss him more.

I felt sorry for the situation that she had found herself in, and it really did seem like the feelings she had were going to take a long time for her to work through.

The storyline in this was basically about Coo and how feelings following the death of her brother, but it was also about her finding someone who she could actually talk to, even if the person wasn't necessarily the sort of person her parent's had in mind for her to talk to. I found it interesting the way she bonded with 'Banks' and tried to help him, even when he wasn't necessarily trying to help himself.

The ending of this was quite sad, and also left a ton of stuff feeling unfinished. This book basically was about Coo and her grief, but by the end of the book I think she may actually have been more depressed than she was at the start, which was a bit of an anti-happily-ever-after really. I did enjoy the story, and the emotions in there were very real, but I would have liked a happier, more hopeful ending of some kind, as the ending was actually really sad, and I have mixed feelings about the book because of it.

Overall; a good story, but with a sad ending.

8 out of 10.

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## Kelly says

*Stones* is the story of a young girl named Corinne (or Coo) who's struggling with some heavy family drama. Her brother Sam died a year ago because of alcohol but she doesn't miss the person he became. He was violent, mean and not the brother he should have been. Her parents seemed to not care at all if Sam hurt her, and it's still all about him, even now. She's feeling lonely and doesn't really connect with anyone, until Banks. I was really curious about him and I wanted to know more even if the book was focused on Coo's feelings.

What I didn't like? The ending. I don't really enjoy open endings and here it's like I didn't know at all what happened to Banks and I hated that feeling. It makes you think (view spoiler), but I'm not going to think that way because I can't bear it! It's too sad for my sensible heart. I felt bad how Coo left things with him and I just wanted to have more of a happy ending! I'm frustrated to be left that way...

Overall, I found that the story was compelling and realistic. It was emotional and I may have shed a tear or two. I liked it even if it was sad and a little unfinished.

\*\*\*ARC received through Netgalley in exchange of an honest review\*\*\*

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## **Dana says**

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

Wow. I need to decompress after this novel. It's very depressing and deals with a lot of heavy stuff. However I really enjoyed reading this. The writing is beautiful. The main character Coe has a very honest voice and a stark attention to detail. The novel moves along at a very slow pace but personally I love slow books because I savour any chance to stay in the authors world a little longer.

I did however feel that there was not much resolution in this novel and that didn't sit too well with me, at the end of my reading I remember just sitting there, looking at the last page wondering "Is that it?". This book reads like a diary, not in the format but rather in the thought process. Coe secretly sharing her innermost secrets and worries everyday. The lack of dialogue in this novel added to the diary feel.

Overall I would recommend this book. The writing was great and it makes a beautiful debut novel.

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## **Laurence R. says**

Actual rating: 3.5/5

It was a really, really hard read.

I didn't know what to expect when I started this novel. I hadn't read the synopsis or reviews about it, so I went in without knowing a thing. However, I think that the title, Stones, prepared me a little for what I was going to read.

I really liked the descriptions, especially since I've seen a lot of pictures and videos of Brighton and I've read about it, too. I felt like I was on the beach, although the ones in Stones are much more frightening than the ones I had in mind. I think the author really pictured the atmosphere and the scenery, as well as the creepy characters, because I had a chill when some of them were described. Honestly, I think the descriptions were the best thing in this novel, at least for me.

I think the storyline is really interesting, too. I don't want to talk about it in details, because I liked reading without knowing what to expect, but I think it was fast-paced and it made me very curious, from the beginning to the end. I like the fact that it mentioned harder topics that aren't usually mentioned in YA books, because I feel like alcoholism isn't mentioned enough, especially to teens who party every weekend. I liked the way it was discussed, too.

My biggest problem with this novel has to be the improbability in the relationships. I felt like the beginning was too creepy and weird to be real, which made it hard to believe for me. The way Coe talked to people was fake for me sometimes, which I really disliked. I think it made me feel a lot less invested in the story than I should've been, which is why I simply liked it alright.

Overall, I think it was an okay book, not fantastic, but not bad, either.

(Thank you NetGalley for providing me with a digital copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.)

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## **Jay Fox says**

Thank you, HarperCollins UK, Digital for providing this book, gratis, via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

2.75 - For getting me to the last page.

I was intrigued by the publisher's teaser of this book. Coo's story is one that happens WAY too often and I have sympathy for children who are forced to deal with addiction on top of all of life's other stresses. The book was able to draw out genuine emotions through Coo's narrative.

Her attachment with Banks is understandable...trying to live out the relationship she lost with her brother. This relationship, rightly so, was the driving force behind the story. It could have went several ways, but ultimately the author chose one I didn't care for.

For me, the story was a bit slow and some of the character development was lacking or shallow. On a bright note, it kept me entertained just enough to get me to an ending which let me down, but I won't spoil it for others.

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