



The Book of Names

Royce Leville

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Strange situations, unsolvable problems, secret lives, redemption and revenge.

Who are the people behind the names? Frankie, Pavel, Willard, Esmeralda, Milo, Shannon ... these are just some of the stories in The Book of Names. There's a benevolent locksmith with keys to every lock in town. There's a serial-killing vet who harvests his victims' organs. A paediatrician battling her own imaginary friends. A group of men locked inside a container, stranded at a harbour somewhere. A performance artist who can open a bottle of champagne in an extraordinary way. And more. Royce Leville's second book is a mesmerizing collection of the bizarre, the off-kilter, the strangely normal and the cleverly humorous.

Winner of the Australia/New Zealand category in the 2015 IPPYs.

The Book of Names Details

Date : Published January 13th 2015 by Ripple Books

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Author : Royce Leville

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Genre : Short Stories, Fiction

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From Reader Review The Book of Names for online ebook

Iona Stewart says

I got this book free from Library Thing in return for a review.

Short stories are not my favourite form of literature, so I rarely read any.

However, I found this collection very readable and suspenseful; I read one every night in bed before putting the lights out.

The author has a distinctive style, and I found these stories different from any I had read before.

He writes about people who perhaps try to do the right thing, as I believe we all do in our way, but who have a different set of morals than most. One man thought it was the right thing to do to bump off a certain sort of person, since he believed he was thereby doing the world a favour. It turned out that perhaps he was focusing on getting rid of precisely this kind of person because they resembled himself, and he was really in this way attempting to get rid of his own undesirable tendencies.

The book was well-written but with too much focus on the macabre to my taste. Some of the stories were a bit scary, and some of them I may not quite have got the point of.

If you are fond of short stories, particularly ones that are somewhat spooky, I would thus advise you to give this book a try. You will probably find it enjoyable, and even if you don't you will keep turning the pages.

Meghan says

By the logic of the second story in this book ("Ronald"), I need to give this book a bad review. It came without swag. It came without first class comped orgies. It came without packages, boxes or bags. It did come from Germany, so I got to put my basic German to good use reading the envelope's customs declaration form (although I could have probably guessed what *buch* meant even without a German 101 course). But I've got to channel Ronald here -- pull out an awful passage and compare the book to Kafka. Except there aren't really any truly awful passages in this book, and I've never read Kafka, so I suppose I should just review The Book of Names properly.

The Book of Names is a collection of stories about horrible people doing horrible things to each other in absurdest fashions. Right up my alley. It was an amusing read, sometimes a bit spooky, sometimes a bit mirthful. We jump around, from Germany to the UK to Australia to Canada. Completely readable and the technique is more than fine. I would say the performance is wound very tightly. It's a compelling group of stories and there's the fun, at least in my copy, of matching up the people in the stories with the diagrams on the front and the alternative titles for the short stories on the back. And the stories aren't all about men. There are stories about women, a little more than a third with female protagonists. But therein lies what about this collection makes me uncomfortable.

Now, it's hardly as if the men here are pinnacles of virtuousness, but the women all seem to be variations of *bitches be crazy*. Catfighting ("Sandra"). Promiscuity ("Barbara"). Delusional ("Emily"). Vindictive ("Shannon"). Man-hating career woman ("Marty"). They seem so much more one-note than those stories

with male protagonists. Is it the stories? Or are my ovaries just more attuned to lousy feminine characterizations? I mean, realistically, does Marty, an educated, well-placed career woman really think that enslaving men forever and having women run everything is really a solution? And what's wrong with Barbara, a senior, enjoying sex? I don't see why I should be disgusted by that, like the man through whose eyes Barbara's story is told.

The Book of Names completely. But I had an enjoyable two evenings reading it. Now off to sell my copy on ebay (the last Ronald reference since it's the end of the review).

The Book of Names by Royce Leville went on sale January 13, 2015.

I received a copy free from Librarything in exchange for an honest review.

Stacey says

Disclaimer: I received this book for free through a Goodreads giveaway.

I tend to struggle with short story collections and this one was no different, a mixed bag with some real highlights but a few duds too, with my overall average rating being 3.3 stars. Each story focusing around a single named character (with one exception), whether the protagonist or someone who impacts them even from entirely off-screen, there were some really very interesting ideas here, from the only locksmith in town and his "art", to the race-walker starting a new life, and the rather meta final story of a writer writing about a writer writing about writing, often coming with a touch of the macabre or grotesque.

TW should be noted for implications of child abuse in several stories and suicidal thoughts in another.

Individual story ratings:

Willard -4 stars

Ronald -3 stars

Mikelis -3 stars

Sandra - 2 stars

Esmeralda -3 stars

Pavel -4 stars

Barbara -4 stars

Karl -3 stars

Emily -3 stars

Milo -3.5 stars

Frankie -3 stars

Shannon -4 stars

Brian -4 stars

Marty -2.5 stars

Gregor -4 stars

John -4 stars

Clare & Ellis - 3 stars

Marie -3 stars

Musa -3 stars

Victor - 4 stars

Elisa Panjang says

First of all, I love the cover, and then the stories were so fun to read. I read this book while in a plane. Very enjoyable.

-Won in a Goodreads giveaway

Cin says

This was a good read. I truly enjoyed some of the stories in this collection. At the beginning I didn't think I would like this book. Since this is a collection of short stories, I kept on reading and I am glad that I did. I would recommend this book to those who love short stories. A well written book.

I received a free copy of this book from the Goodreads First Reads program.

Kelly Knapp says

Easy read, with short stories ranging from a town's only locksmith, a bookreviewer, to a teacher turned gravedigger, this author writes stories with disturbing characters bent on "helping." These are laugh out loud, spine-crawling vignettes surprisingly well-written

Storyheart says

I won this book in Goodreads FirstReads giveaway and it arrived gift-wrapped on Christmas Eve. It was a very enjoyable Christmas present; each story evoked a strong emotion ranging from laughter to skin-crawling creepiness. Highly recommended for lovers of short stories.

Carsten says

Disclaimer: I got this book for free earlier this year as a goodreads giveaway - thanks to the author!

This was a very good read. A collection of short stories all of them titled with the names of the respective main characters - that's why it is *the book of names*. Every story is different. There are no connections. Or I didn't get the connections. Also the narrative style is different.

In conclusion everybody has their dark secret or hidden passion and sometimes it gets visible. By another person or by an occurrence. Sometimes we are walking on the edge of our dark souls. Sometimes we are observing others walking on the edge. And that's why this book is great and you won't put it away until you are on the last page.

Who wants to read this? It's available as a bookcrossing book.

Text also published on my blog.

Barbara says

3.5/5. I received a free copy of this book from the publisher via the Goodreads giveaway.

"The Book of Names" is a collection of short stories, with each short story named after its main character. The book has a variety of settings (London, Germany, Vancouver, Australia) and well as a huge variety of characters, some bad and some good.

As with any collection of short stories, there were some stories here that I really enjoyed, and others that I didn't enjoy as much. For example, I thought that Sandra's story was entertaining, and Brian's longer story had a lot of really interesting parts that I would read a whole book on. On the other hand, I didn't like the first story (Willard) or the final two stories (Musa and Victor).

Overall, this is a quick, short book that has something for everyone and I would recommend it for anyone looking for a quick read that doesn't require a lot of prolonged attention.

Blake Fraina says

I found myself laughing quite a few times while reading Royce Leville's peculiar story collection, *The Book of Names*. Mostly, it was the sort of nervous titter elicited from seeing someone else squirm.

The "names" of the title are the protagonists of each story – a rogue's gallery of oddballs that includes a locksmith who has secretly obtained the keys to every residence in his town, a vengeful gravedigger for a small town parish wrongfully accused of a terrible crime, an underappreciated marketing executive, a motley crew of illegal immigrants trapped in a shipping container, a flirty, murderous septuagenarian and an out of work Olympic racewalker.

The majority of these people feel misunderstood and employ fanciful, and sometimes downright creepy, ways to gain control over the world and people around them. Whether it's something relatively normal, such as the man who creates an elaborate adulterous fantasy about a lady contortionist or as unsettling as the locksmith's investigations into the homes of all the town's occupants in his role as self-appointed protector and moral arbiter. The marketing exec even goes so far as to invent an entire world, Herth, ostensibly as a bedtime story to amuse her daughters, which ultimately plays out like a wish fulfillment fantasy of female empowerment.

Most of the stories are fairly short and are written in a crisp, compulsively readable style. Though not quite as whimsical, I think Leville's work would appeal to fans of Kelly Link for its off-kilter characters and skewed take on the world. They are sometimes funny, sometimes a bit chilling, very sinister and vastly entertaining.

Also, I should mention that I received my reviewer's copy directly from the publisher, Ripple Books (located in Germany). They sent it gift-wrapped (!) and signed by the author. The book itself has a "Travel Page" on which all the book's readers are asked to write their name, date and location so that the book

contains a records of its travels, which I thought was neat. And the short story titles are written on the back of the book (out of order) while the index page shows only the protagonist's first names (thus the title) so it was kind of a fun challenge to match the actual titles with the stories once I was finished. Really cool, fun packaging.

Taylor says

I got a free copy of the book through a giveaway on Goodreads. In return for an honest review.

The book is good. My only complaint is that the stories don't link together. That being said, if there's ever a full version of the first story, I would buy it. I want to know more about the locksmith.

Hannah says

Enjoyable read. Some stories better than others but all in all made me laugh and smile - and sometimes made me feel slightly terrified...

Wonderliv says

Full disclosure: I received this book through a Goodreads Giveaway, in exchange for an honest review. It came gift-wrapped inside the envelope in a very joyful paper, which made this collection even more exciting to open.

And what a surprise indeed! The Book of Names is filled with excellent and unique short stories. The protagonists are portrayed with impact, and you dive right into their most intimate thoughts and private actions, though you may have to wait to make sense of them. Most of the characters are involved in some sort of crime, whether it is in the legal sense of the word or an ethical crime of morals and impropriety; sometimes both. The author makes these anti-heroes identifiable and yet despicable. Endearing, and yet appalling. Thrilling, inspiring even, but incredibly creepy. He is skilled at building suspense, both inside each story and in the book as a whole: after reading the first tales, you start expecting a certain inventively twisted experience.

Behind seemingly boring jobs, you discover hidden projects of massive proportions. In one party, past offences and everybody's sins are brought to light. Some folks really cannot be judged by their covers, and all that lingers is not old. Friends become foes in one turn of events, but there's always a way to reinvent your life. Lust explodes in startling ways. And occasionally, the faults of the individual ensue from the failings of the system.

This collection is dark but highly enjoyable. You'll wince and grind your teeth one moment, and chuckle shamelessly the next. You'll shiver of dread and delight. Some outcomes will leave you disturbed, and others smirking. You'll be captivated by this circus of the uncomfortable. Because of the sensitive and violent nature of some of the mysteries exposed, I would recommend this book to all adult readers.

It is called the Book of Names; but really, each story goes beyond the façade of public life and brings you the

most clandestine parts of every character's life, the ones he or she doesn't tell anyone about, their bare soul. Royce Leville leads you into the dark depths of humanity, of opportunism, of self-serving entrepreneurship or borderline insanity. More than names, it is a book of Secrets.

Paul says

I received a free copy of this book as a Goodreads giveaway.

I love short story collections and this was an unusually good collection - far fewer filler stories with almost all having something to offer.

Recommended reading
