



## Prizes: The Selected Stories

*Janet Frame*

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### **Prizes: The Selected Stories** Janet Frame

The most comprehensive selection of Janet Frame's stories ever published, this exceptional collection has been chosen from the four different volumes released during her lifetime. Featuring the best of her stories, the book includes pieces that were written over four decades, including stories from her debut collection, *The Lagoon and Other Stories*. First published in 1951, those stories were written while Frame was confined in a mental hospital. When the collection won the Hubert Church Award, a threatened brain operation (akin to a lobotomy) was averted.

The stories in this new book also include selections from *You Are Now Entering the Human Heart*, published in the 1980s after a hiatus from writing. The last stories she published before her death, her writings from this time reveal Frame's unflinching ability to explore the drama of madness, isolation, and identity.

This new book also includes five short stories that have not been collected before, completing a volume that testifies to the brilliance of Janet Frame's life and literary talent.

### **Prizes: The Selected Stories Details**

Date : Published December 15th 2009 by Counterpoint (first published 2009)

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Author : Janet Frame

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## From Reader Review Prizes: The Selected Stories for online ebook

### Josephine Ensign says

Janet Frame is an author I only recently discovered while living and working in New Zealand. She has rapidly become one of my favorite authors, and she shines most brightly through the gems of short stories included in this collection. I happily stumbled into this book while browsing the book selection in Iowa City's Prairie Lights indie bookstore. And to remember that it was her writing of short stories—and having an early collection of them win a prize—that saved her from being forced to have a lobotomy! Even without knowing that fact, many of these short stories will send daggers through your heart.

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### Alan says

After reading the first bunch of stories (the book reprints selected stories from 4 collections, and some unpublished ones) I was prepared to give this book 5 stars. They were beautiful, poetic vignettes on growing up. Just wonderful. However the next few selections (from Snowman Snowman: Fables and Fantasies) weren't my cup of tea, and from then on I found the stories a mixed bag. The ones on childhood were nearly always great - The Reservoir, A sense of Proportion, for example - the fable like ones not so. Actually thinking back I did like others too - the poet Alan one, the escaped sex offender one, so I'm upping my 3 stars to 4. She is a great writer. Here's a taste:

The sun's hair stood on end. The sky accommodated all visiting darkness and light... Snow fell in all seasons, white hyphens dropping evenly, linking syllables of sky and earth. Flowers bloomed forever, spinning their petal-spokes like golden wheels, sucking the sun like whirlpools.

(from A Sense of proportion, describing a child's painting).

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### Jeff Scott says

Janet Frame has always been able to capture the joy and frustration of childhood. She can recall the sweet sounds, the adventures, and the innocence. She aptly relays the hypocrisy of adults, or worse, that feeling of becoming an adult oneself. Gone are the glories of the first time, those satisfactions one gets in childhood. We must face the cold cruel world of adulthood someday. Janet Frame reminds us what that feels like.

This book is intended to be a small sampling of her work. Some of the earlier stories are very short. I think that can make the work hard to get into at times (even though many of these stories are very good). I had favorites throughout the book.

My Last Story exemplifies frustration of expression. The feeling when you keep honing your craft, but you don't feel like it is getting anywhere.

The Terrible Screaming represents how we can collectively ignore what is right in front of us. It has a surreal quality to it.

The Mythmakers Office has a Saramago quality to it. (How to fight death by ignoring it).

In *The Reservoir*, when one realizes one's parents are more scared than the children are.

Prizes, "Life is hell, but at least there are prizes". This is the story I heard from the New Yorker. Miranda July, promoting her new book *The First Bad Man*, read Prizes on the air. I read Janet Frame's posthumously published *Between My Father and the King*. I was immediately hooked.

*The Triumph of Poetry*, an unnamed despair, of mediocrity.

*They Never Looked Back*, a young couple trying to make it (and perhaps ill-equipped to do so).

This is a good introduction to Janet Frame. I would recommend other collected works that are a bit tighter and work together better. It is like getting a greatest hits album. There isn't a cohesive theme, but you understand the sound.

Favorite Passages:

The packing of words with varied intentions is like writing a letter to someone in a foreign land and addressing it to oneself; it never reaches its destination. (*The Terrible Screaming* p73)

There comes a time when one must rely on one's own news, images, interpretations, when one must resist the pressure upon one's house of conforming, orthodox, shared seasons, and, using the panel in the secret room, make one's escape to fluid, individual weather; stand alone in the dark listening to the worm knocking three times, the rose resisting, and the inhabited forest of the heart accomplishing its own private moments of growth. (*One Must Give Up* p. 95)

Names, they realized, bestow space, keys, power on the nameless which encircle human lives, waiting their chance. (*The Triumph of Poetry*. P 200)

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## Soonhar says

I became interested in reading Janet Frame's book after watching Jane Campion's film *Angel At My Table* about the life of this New Zealand writer. It's always interesting to read an author's work when you know something about her/his childhood and life, and in this case I find her life (or at least Campion's depiction) far more compelling than her stories. She was clearly talented; her stories have a way of leaving you slightly unsettled with their quirky characters and plot twists.

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## Eve Kay says

This collection felt to me like half and half. Especially the earlier ones spoke to me the most and were so beautiful and moving. They were really, really, short, miniatures of tales, but each one left me with a kind of a longing.

The more we progressed, the less I felt...well, anything really. I think I might give this collection another go at a future date to see if it's just me.

### **Patricia Mauerhofer says**

Many wonderful 'miniatures'. She's a master in creating palpable atmospheres and I admire her skills of getting into children's and teenager's minds. Some of the stories go so deeply under your skin, you need to stop reading and do something else to digest.

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### **Della O'Shea says**

From one short story, "Lolly-legs"... "he always hurried first to the edge to look at the sea and the waves that elbowed each other in their continual journeying."

Love short stories; each of these are extremely short on words but long in metaphors and insightful observations. Beautifully written and often enticingly open ended.

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### **Lisette says**

These are some of the most interesting short stories I've read so far. My most favorite stories came from "The Reservoir: Stories and Sketches" and "You Are Now Entering the Human Heart".

Her style is poetic and flowy, and her protagonists are well-conditioned for this style as they often carry on heavy undertones in their leisure (like, when Deanna in "They Never Looked Back" was disgusted by the fish she had to gut and resented her inability to adopt naturally the pioneer lifestyle; or how Edith in "The Teacup" went frantic when she saw Bill's teacup was misplaced when she had set everything in order for him to live comfortably, hoping her domestic affections would catch his attention so she could finally settle down comfortably, too).

"Prizes", "The Bull Calf", both with young female protagonists, and "The Bath" had huge staying power. All had themes of alienation due to the seemingly practical rituals of growing up -- and in the case of "The Bath", growing old. Frame isn't straight-forward with her message in these, unlike the fable-y story of the "Two Sheep" which had more conventional theories, but not necessarily flat. Her telling of loneliness and terror in growing up, growing old, are loyal to the honest madness of regular life. Her characters often are submerged in intense feelings they don't completely understand, or try to even deconstruct, and have had their shells broken by the real world.

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### **Bill says**

as usual i can't get into short stories...these average 3 to 4 pages each...they barely get started and then they are over with nothing really happening.

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### **Alice Urchin says**

I found that I really liked the stories from Snowman Snowman and You Are Now Entering the Human Heart, and a few random others, but a lot of the stories from The Lagoon just didn't interest me. I had to force myself to get through a lot of the stories from The Lagoon because they couldn't hold my attention. I was a little disappointed about that because I love some of her stories so much. I think I like her fables and fantasies the best of all of her work. "The Terrible Screaming," "The Mythmaker's Office," and "Solutions" were probably my favorite in this collection.

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### **Tanya says**

3.5 stars

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### **Sarah Walsh says**

Unfortunate, twenty or so years ago, I rejected Frame's written work. In a classroom environment and in a foreign place, we'd arrived in New Zealand. An Angel at my Table wouldn't distract my home-sickness and ache. Now, a different story or stories and the back of the book indicates, her 'versatility dazzles'.

Frame's talent, description extraordinaire, her characters, emotions, she puts and directs you to her imagined places. Almost all these works make it possible to relax in short and at length in bursts of nature, mystery, analysis of the human condition including her own, indeed, an awful personal story and thankful she claimed mental overthrow in these works.

The Teacup. A relevant short in that the storytelling's of a woman clambering attention all over a masculinised man. A country's hero, him in the army and Edith aims to please. The familiar swashbuckler falls short in that the world owes him. His special cup goes missing. This is devastating as though the cup a symbol of love nowhere to be and in tension Edith takes her empty out on another woman.

'Attached to the special shelf prepared for Bill there was a row of golden cup hooks; upon one of them Edith hung the teacup she had chosen for him, a large deep cup with the words ARKLOW POTTERY EIRE DONEGAL, encircled by a smudged blue capital E, printed underneath. In every way the teacup seemed specially right for Bill. How Edith longed for him to be settled in, having his tea, with her pouring from the new teapot warmed under its new cosy, into his special teacup!'

Frame's knowing in fantasy and reality and spirit of a country of sheep would be dank without her.

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### **Belinda Rule says**

I loved Frame's autobiography years ago but hadn't read anything of hers since. The story 'Prizes' was on the New Yorker podcast recently and was both bitchily hilarious and extremely moving, so expectations were high.

Bit of a mixed bag. The early material is melancholically sentimental. Frame's habit of creating a heavy-handed symbol (e.g. a bird calling sadly, representing the sadness of the protagonist) and then repeating it even more forcefully in the final paragraph, as if we could possibly have failed to hear that trumpet blaring right in our ear the first time, turns me into a bratty schoolchild who will now resist the lesson at all costs.

In later work Frame becomes sharper, meaner and funnier (which are sides of the same coin, really) and I start to enjoy myself far more. 'Prizes' is still by far the winner for me. I wished for more in a similar vein.

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### **Niki Tulk says**

Janet Frame writes from a liminal place, full of observations that shiver, mirage-like, on a horizon that seems to divide the real from the subconscious. She is at once precise and meditative, and always infuses the bright and joyous moments with shafts of pain. She writes childhood (both experienced and remembered) better than anyone. Yet again, on finishing her work, I salute her.

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### **Lisa says**

Dark and moody, just as you would suspect.

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