



Me and My Baby View the Eclipse

Lee Smith

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It is Lee Smith's "love for her characters"--as the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote--that gives her work "a down-home flavor, as satisfying as an old-fashioned Sunday dinner." And she certainly loves the people in the stories that make up her first collection since *Cakewalk*.

These are average folks whose average lives are suddenly shaken up by the eclipses that come to us all--illness, death, divorce, the loss of faith, of children, of dreams. The stories of these eclipses--sometimes uproariously funny, sometimes unbearably sad, occasionally visionary--suggest that love can bring meaning to even the craziest lives.

From the book jacket

Me and My Baby View the Eclipse Details

Date : Published June 23rd 1997 by Ballantine Books (first published 1990)

ISBN : 9780345419101

Author : Lee Smith

Format : Paperback 208 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Fiction, American, Southern, Contemporary

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Berkles says

Smith is a force of nature. She concocts elaborate plots with intricately woven characters (like Flannery O'Connor) and tells the story in the simplest, most unobtrusive way she can (like Tolstoy). Highlights: really all except the romance novel one, which is still good, but the titular story might make you cry.

Jackie says

Another book with short stories by Lee Smith. She writes with each character's diction telling his or her social standing and personal opinions. The title of the book is the last short story in the book. Each story has a theme, and sometimes I thought they would all deal with divorce, or superstition for motivation, or justification of irrational behavior sometimes known as denial. Thanks to this approach to writing, the author makes the reader smarter than the story teller!

Some phrases appear in this and other books: "seersucker suit," and "s/he went to church every time the door cracked open."

Agatha Donkar says

I love Lee Smith's novels, but I love her short stories -- especially this collection -- even more. She's got a real eye for finding the most *human* parts of her characters, and making you love them despite their flaws. The title story is one of my top five short stories of all time. (Three of the others appear in W.P. Kinsella's *The Thrill of the Grass*, and the fifth is Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard To Find".)

Melki says

Pleasant as a cloudless summer day, the stories in this book are sweet, charming, and funny. Quite a few of them deal with women getting on with their lives after their menfolk have hightailed it for greener, younger pastures.

"Intensive Care" was the most powerful story. A man reminisces as he waits for his wife to die. I'm fairly immune to emotional manipulation, but the last line of this one made me burst into tears.

Smith has a gossipy "just between us girls" style. Reading this was like sitting quietly in the next room, eavesdropping on your mother's bridge club. You find out who wore what to church last Sunday, and a little bit about life as well.

Karen says

This was a weird book. Disjointed. Did not enjoy at all.

Stephanie says

I had wanted to read this book for a long time and now that I have , I have to say it wasn't exactly what I expected. The authentic Southernness was there and as a person who has grown up in the South, I recognized and related to that immediately. It felt very familiar. Most of the stories had gripping elements and a couple were especially engrossing, but a couple of stories just ended abruptly without any defined ending and although the author provided enough information throughout the narrative for you to know what would likely end up happening, that annoyed me quite a bit. I'm a reader that needs some kind of a definitive ending to feel satisfied and not getting one greatly impacts my enjoyment.

Lee Smith is a talented writer and this book was a worthwhile read but not a book I'm likely to ever read again.

Anne says

I love the way this author writes, and some of these short stories were just fantastic, but I found the subject matter in all of them to be too similar. Variations on a theme, I guess, but I tired of it a bit after a while.

Cynthia Ritchie says

I love this short story collection by Southern writer Lee Smith. Her wit and ear for dialogue is unmatched, resulting in prose that is both wickedly sharp and yet surprisingly tender. My favorite is "Tongues of Fire," about a girl who turns to religion for answers after her father has a nervous breakdown.

"Me and My Baby View the Eclipse," the title story, is also worthy of a good read.

I visit this collection every few years or so and always, it's like spending time with an old and very dear friend.

Anne says

OK, finishing books that I found painful. I don't know who cares about all these bimbos with no education, not me. However 2 of these stories were amusing, the last two, reason enough to put them in the back of the book. According to Lee Smith, or her readers, everybody in the south has no moral code, no education, no taste, and all pop in and out of bed with odious characters. Why is this interesting to anybody? Please tell me her books will NOT be sent to any foreign nation, or galaxy, to give a picture of American/southern lack of culture.

Amanda says

I love this book; I first read it in the late '90s, I think, and recently re-read it and was glad that it didn't disappoint, after all these years. Lee Smith has the most wonderful feel for the late-20th-century American south, in all its quirks. She doesn't sentimentalize, and is often quite funny, but the way so many of the stories make my heart catch, or cause a sudden lump in my throat and/or tears, is remarkable. Hers is a wise, compassionate perspective. I highly recommend this one.

Tami Porter says

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Frankie Frasure says

Lee Smith has an unusual writing style. Very refreshing. Her characters tend to ramble, digress and get distracted easily at times but you soon realizes that this type of writing is very authentic to how most people think. You get inside the mind of the character and caught up in the moment and thought process.

Janet says

My bookcases are not organized (and me a librarian). They feature shelves and shelves of assorted paperbacks I bought in college and after college, and read or didn't back then, and haven't read in years at any rate. I spotted this collection of short stories by the wonderful Lee Smith on the shelf yesterday, and devoured it overnight, jumping around so that, coincidentally, I got to the most powerful and wonderful story, "Intensive Care", last, and just finished it a couple minutes ago. These economical yet generous stories are mostly domestic vignettes, their protagonists store clerks and small-town homemakers in the American South of the late 20th century. With the exception of "Desire on Domino Island" (a funny, slight spoof on romance novels), they consider a common set of themes - romantic love and infidelity, family, the making of choices that generally could be looked back upon as mistakes. They are sad and sweet and mesmerizing, full of characters anyone would think of as unremarkable and perhaps pathetic, but who are elevated by the clear fierce love of the author for them and, doubtless, for the real people and towns and events that informed their creation. A beautiful collection.

Barbara says

I reread this collection of stories by Lee Smith and found that they have held their charm. The book is populated by the quirky Southern characters one would expect from this author with interesting and varied viewpoints. The collection held together well yet each story was quite individual. The only one I did not care

for was a spoof on romance writing called "Desire on Domino Island." Otherwise, I'd recommend this book to anyone.

Laura says

This was a comfort read, like most of Lee Smith's books, like *Little Women* and *Elizabeth Berg*. The only thing I don't like about Lee Smith's writing is the inevitable infidelity. There is usually at least one person cheating on the other in her books, and the matter-of-fact way the characters do these things leave me with an uneasy anger.
