



Minimum of Two

Tim Winton

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In this collection of stories, the characters are ordinary people who battle to maintain loyalty against all odds; women, children and men whose relationships strain under pressure and leave them bewildered, hoping, sometimes fleeing, but often finding strength in forgotten parts of themselves.

Minimum of Two Details

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Author : Tim Winton

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Dunkalunk says

After reading this I got the impression that TW was facing a deadline, and had nothing completed to offer- Wullah! A book of short stories!

I like short stories and I found most of these interesting. But each of them seemed to be more of a chapter out of a random book rather than a tale. Few of them reached any kind of conclusion or answered any questions you had formed in your mind.

Wish I could rate it 2.5 instead of 3.

Emily Parker says

Probs more of a 2.5 tbh

Francis says

The prose in this book is relatively effective, but its portrayal of gender relations definitely caused me to raise an eyebrow. Most of the men in this book are portrayed as childish, callous, or perverted, while the women are generally presented as helpless victims, or resentful nannies who have to supervise their idiot husbands. The one exception would be Queenie's story, which portrays quite a healthy partnership.

I think I'm being a bit over-sensitive here anyways. This is a decent selection of short stories, and though more character-driven than plot-driven, it's a decent read; but if you need an incredibly interesting plot to get you through this, the everyday trials of this characters may prove a little drab.

Caillin says

My actual rating would be 3.5

It's well written and highly descriptive in an unusual way that reminds me of the work of Markus Zusack in *The Book Thief*

The brashness of vulgar descriptions was something I was both somewhat embarrassed to read and valued the honesty in what was written, how it was hardly self-censored

I found it very hard to maintain focus on the story with the heavy amount of ambience description, but when I was able to focus reading often felt like just experiencing a stream of consciousness

The book was also a very heavy read for me, often the depressing subject matter felt a bit too much, not that it was very traumatising really, there just wasn't a break it felt from the somber atmosphere driven throughout the book; this made reading it all in one go a bit of a struggle mentally

Ruby Bisson says

Read it in one sitting. Inhaled it too quickly.

Nathan says

Imagine if you could take a glance at a moment in your life. Would it be a dramatic life changing event of a simple string of occurrences that lead you down the beaten path? This is exactly what Tim Winton has tried to explore in his book *Minimum of Two*. This anthology of short stories produces many windows into brief moments in time and life. Chronology is a powerful element of these stories and whilst each story is unique there are two recurring characters interwoven throughout the book. It is mesmerising to bear witness to so many lives in these stories and empowering to see Jerra and Rachel fight for their own lives.

Change is one of the most powerful elements of *Minimum of Two* for many reasons. The book takes the reader on a journey into the lives of many characters. The book only shows one experience for each of the characters and as such introduces a new dimension for the reader to be immersed in. Winton create moments in a person's life that may not always be dramatically life changing but are in no way insignificant. This is clear in the story of *Distant Lands* which depicts a young girl trying to find her place in the world. The events in this story are by no means dramatic and yet are overflowing with underlying drama. It is a story about the unfortunately nicknamed 'Fat Maz'. The young girl spends her days taking care of her parent's newsagency and wondering what she is doing with her life. Everything changes when a mysterious dark man enters and begins reading, but never purchasing, *Distant Lands*. It is this simple but beautiful change in her daily life that empowers her to find great purpose in her life and leave the tired confines of her family. It is breathtaking to see just how small a change is needed to affect the rest of our lives.

The only characters in the book to be featured in more than one story are Jerra and Rachel. Winton has created a disjointed and purposeful view into the experiences this married couple face throughout their lives. This element of time is an interesting factor for the Jerra and Rachel stories. You become a helpless observer to their lives as you watch them grow and change. One of the biggest transformations witnessed through the book comes from Rachel, as Jerra explains, 'she'd had the life torn from her as well as the child'. She has become placid and withdraws after the birth of her baby and as such is portrayed as quite a weak character which is supported by Keane (2006), "Rachel struggles with ill-health and depression but finds her way through to the future". The gradual transition she makes is empowering to observe as she comes back to the strong individual she once was, 'After twenty years of confirming her own ineptitude, Rachel found she was strong'. Bearing witness to time passing by and characters developing deeper with every moment is what makes this book so engaging. The nature of the short stories is that they do require some reflection before moving onto the next. In life we need to stop and think about what we have just experienced and it is no different from *Minimum of Two*.

Water appears as one of the most defining qualities about many of Tim Winton's works including *Breath*, *Cloudstreet* and the *Lockie Leonard* trilogy. In *Minimum of Two* this element is highlighted and embraced on several levels in the text. It appears as a form of renewal and cleansing in many of the short stories. It is particularly notable in *Blood and Water* where the reader witnesses the birth of young Sam. In this story water appears as the very catalyst of birth and life within the first sentence, "Rachel laughed and there was water down her leg. 'It's coming' she said". Whilst this is a particularly profound use of water as the sign of life it also makes very notable statements in other stories such as *Laps*. An editorial in *The Age* stated that,

“As in others of these stories, water, specifically the ocean, operates as a powerful symbol of renewal, of life urges, of cleansing” . This has particular significance to understanding the function of not only the stories in Minimum of Two but also in understanding Tim Winton himself.

There are multitudes of ways to explore and enjoy Tim Winton’s Minimum of Two, but it is in the elegance of simplicity that it truly shines. It is the way in which Winton has crafted stories of change, growth and the deceptively mundane that makes it such a powerful book to read. It is not often that a book will come along and make you reassess the experiences of your life. How we acknowledge and observe the fundamentals of life determines where it will take us in the future as well as appreciating the here and now.

Thomas says

I absolutly hated this book, i had to read it for VCE english and i disliked every minute i spent with these characters. turning each page was a challenge becuase of how much i despised these people and the situations they are in. Terribly disappointing.

Noam says

(3.5/5)

Sandra says

I suspect on a second read, these stories will be upgraded to four stars. Tim Winton's prose is like fine bones, polished by sand and used to tell stories of slightly damaged, untidy, normal human lives and interactions. Often bleak, but also often with a hint of hope,. And very much of their time and place.

Lincoln says

I was already a Winton fan when I picked up Minimum of Two. As far as I’m concerned he can do no wrong (although my faith was tested somewhat by the ending of The Riders). But what I found staggering about this short story collection is that he produced it when he was just 27. Over the course of 14 stories, Winton depicts a series of defining moments in his characters’ lives - some clarifying a destiny, others buckling under a life of disappointment - and does it with words of such economy and power it is literally breathtaking. Anyone who might have ever toyed with the notion of being a writer should read this book before they begin. THIS is how it is done.

Ash says

I write this review the night before I intend to walk into my Literature assessment exam for this book, at first I was reluctant to read it, I've never been one for short stories. However, it was the life my teacher so easily

gave these characters, these people in a book that amazed me and brought me to appreciate this book more than I would have four weeks ago. The truth is I really dislike short stories, I love writing, I hate writing short stories and by extension I dislike reading them. However, I may have to reconsider this view, Tim Winton has entirely changed my view on short stories and potentially even Australian authors. As usual, with any collection of short stories I comment upon a certain number of the stories, so here we go:

Forest Winter:

I really enjoyed the ties to the Australian outback, the very nature of the landscape which is captured so brilliantly in this story. I also really connected with Jerra as a character, I admired his courage and continuing strength as he struggled to provide for his family.

The Water Was Dark And It Went Forever Down:

This was perhaps one of my favorites from the text, it was very different in some aspects contrasted strength and weakness. In this story we see a young girl struggling to live with her mother who is struggling following her husband leaving her. We catch a very interesting glimpse into this relationship and how such an even has changed it, in particular we see how the girl strives for freedom from this. I really found it rather creepy, perhaps is the word to use in order to describe it. The language is also very descriptive.

Death Belongs To The Dead, His Father Told Him, And Sadness To The Sad:

This was another of my favorites and I recommend if you are to read this book do not give up before this story, it will remain with you long after you read it. I have barely anything else to say about this story other than: Read it.

All in all, after finally carefully unpicking the aspects of these short stories that makes them as they are I have come to appreciate them more than I could have imagined possible, it has also lifted what would have been a two star rating to at the very least a four star rating as I very much enjoyed the time we spent reading this collection of stories.

4 Stars.

Nick Parkinson says

Tim Winton is a phenomenon. Like 'The Thing Around Your Neck', 'Minimum of Two' thrilled me. Short stories may just be my new fetish, and I can't wait to read Tsiolkas' 'Merciless Gods'.

Winton was young when he wrote this, and I cannot believe the confidence with which he writes. Each word is precise. His prose is balanced: a masterclass in creating suspense through description. The final story, 'Blood and Water', is particularly haunting.

This should be compulsory reading for any Winton fan and is an early, subtle deliberation on masculinity.

Sam Schroder says

This collection of short stories, published in 1987, pre-dates my favourite collection, *The Turning*, but offers the same range of exquisitely drawn characters and raw, real stories that are separate, yet connected. A woman's yearning for more meaning than motherhood, a man's attempts to reconcile himself to mediocrity, parents as secondary characters in other people's lives. This book confirms for me that Winton is a masterful writer who has, for decades, used his writing to explore the Australian psyche and notions of masculinity in a complex world. My devotion to his books remains intact. Highly recommended.

Lee Crossley says

Listened to this as an audiobook and found it really hard to concentrate on characters / plot of stories. But the two that stood out were the title story and the last one - Blood and Water. Has there been a better short story about birth? I am constantly amazed at how well Winton empathises with the female experience. What do others think about this?
