



Half in Love: Stories

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Fourteen remarkable stories that combine strong Western settings with a subtle and distinct female voice. This critically celebrated debut collection marks the exciting beginning of prize-winner Meloy's promising career.

Lean and controlled in their narration, abundant and moving in their effects, Maile Meloy's stories introduce a striking talent. Most are set in the modern American West, made vivid and unexpected in Meloy's unsentimental vision; others take us to Paris, wartime London, and Greece, with the same remarkable skill and intuition.

In "Four Lean Hounds, ca. 1976," two couples face a complicated grief when one of the four dies. In "Ranch Girl," the college-bound daughter of a ranch foreman must choose which adult world she wants to occupy. In "A Stakes Horse," a woman confronts risk and loss at the racetrack and at home. And in "Aqua Boulevard"—winner of the 2001 Aga Khan Prize for Fiction—an elderly Parisian confronts his mortality. Meloy's command of her characters' voices is breathtaking; their fears and desires are deftly illuminated. Smart, surprising, and evocative, Meloy's brilliantly observed stories fully engage the mind and heart.

Half in Love: Stories Details

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From Reader Review Half in Love: Stories for online ebook

Britta says

"She is beautiful, and sparkles like jewels when she is wearing none: skin like gold, white teeth and clear blue eyes."

"Sometimes my son has a face like a storm, and then it clears, and again he is the most attractive child I have ever seen."

Katy says

There was a time when I enjoyed stark, skeletal stories like these; now I find them more withholding than "lean and composed." But that's just me.

Mark says

I recently watched and adored a film called *Certain Women*, directed by Kelly Reichardt. I loved the way the stories carefully, unfolded and discovered that the writer was a novelist and a short story author. I immediately requested this collection and it was as good as expected. I love stories set in the modern American west and Meloy nails it here. I highly recommend it. Here is a taste:

"We left early, heading into a pale sunrise, and somewhere on the winding road through the canyons it turned into a hot, dry day. I sat with my feet on the dash, lead ropes and old race programs on the floor beneath me, and watched the mountains and the impossibly blue sky go by. I'd seen this landscape so much that most of my senses were glutted and one mountain range looked like the next. At other times, and this was one of those, it caught me by surprise and the blue was so vast and bright I couldn't breathe."

Alan says

I enjoyed the stories, some with a degree of sadness to them. They make you feel, they have emotional content.

Christopher says

This collection of fourteen short stories includes two – "Tome" and "Native Sandstone" – that served as inspiration for two of the three parts of director Kelly Reichardt's stirring 2016 cinematic triptych, *Certain Women* (<http://www.filmfestivaltoday.com/film...>). Montana native Maile Meloy has a real knack for these kinds of brief narrative sketches, many of which barely get started before ending abruptly. Indeed, that is both the strength and weakness of the volume: filled with strong descriptions of existential longing, the stories often barely qualify as such, almost too minimalist to register. Still those that resonate stay with you long after reading. My favorites include "Tome," "Ranch Girl," "Aqua Boulevard," "Last of the White

Slaves" and "Thirteen & a Half." It's a mixed bag, but filled with treasure worth mining.

Gloria says

I loooove a good short story. And these are good. But they're...too short. Most of them, I felt like they ended just when I was really getting into them. I wish I could've rated this book 3.5 stars. The stories really are artful and made me want to keep reading, but they just end too soon. Still, I liked them enough that I ordered another book of hers immediately from the library.

Michael says

I didn't care for this and am having trouble coming up with good reasons why. The author is a talented writer and the stories present interesting situations - a soldier in World War II on the night before he is to cross into France, a group of travelers stranded and one of them is a truck driver who has just been involved in a fatal accident, a man coming to the realization that his wife is seriously ill. Yet, I couldn't really get into them. Maybe it was the sameness of them - the desolate landscapes, the slightly depressed tone, the unhappy women tied to inconsiderate men with one syllable names, the characters whose reaction to crisis was to have sex, or fantasize about sex, with someone other than his or her spouse. I needed to get away from Cort, and Chase and Miles and Jack, and all of the characters who seem to be lawyers, but don't really practice law.

I know that many have admired this collection, and that they have good reasons for doing so, but it wasn't my cup of tea. The last story collection I read before this one was "The Tenth of December." After that, this seemed pretty ho-hum.

Mary says

Good short stories, set in ranches and towns in Montana and Utah. I picked this up because I liked the authors audio book called Don't be Alarmed or something like that. I think I've found an author to follow. I'm going to try The Apothecary next.

Jennifer says

Meh. Not really a fan. I read *rave* reviews but I much prefer Pam Houston over this author. I found myself bored with the short stories. A small collection of pages, yet I didn't even feel like reading the last story.

Kelly says

I don't have high expectations, really. I mean, look at my track record...I'm easy to please. Yet, I could not find one story in this collection that I liked. Although beautifully written, each story is about as interesting as watching paint dry. Also, I don't always need to have a happy ending, but I do require purpose in a story. A

reason to turn the page. Instead, what I got were sad, random glimpses into people's lives for no apparent reason than to show that's it's tough all over.

Jamie says

These stories are not as refined or as perfect as Meloy's novels, but they are just as beautiful. Almost all of them take place in Montana or other similar barren, solitary locations; all are haunting and somehow frightening. She is so spare, so simple in her writing, but in a way that makes her so very powerful. This woman knows how to make you FEEL it in your gut. It's incredible, really.

Jane says

Maybe even 5 stars. These aren't happy stories, but they are so beautifully written in deceptively simple prose. She's a fantastic writer.

Laura says

I will be honest and tell you that I requested books by Maile Meloy from my library because I adore Colin Meloy's singing and lyrics. Even his banter with the crowd during a concert is amusing and endearing.

Anyway, uh, right, Maile Meloy. Usually I look forward to short stories, but after the first two or three in a book, they all go downhill. The first story, "Tome", was about a lawyer who went to help her client in a hostage situation. The second was a teeny bit contrived, about a man who realizes his dead friend wasn't exactly the best friend a man could have, but I was very amused by the lyrics in a song mentioned in the book, (actually an e. e. cummings poem) "All in green went my love riding, on a great horse of gold into the silver dawn." It made me smile because of a Decemberists song that went "My true love went riding out in green and white and grey..." I wonder if the Meloy parents emphasized e. e. cummings in their house.

The third, fourth, and fifth stories weren't my favorite. They just felt like tiny peeks at different people's sad lives. However, the reason I like this book so much is that when the sixth story, Red, comes along, everything starts to get better again. I'm really looking forward to reading more by her.

Ally Armistead says

"Half in Love" will always remain one of my absolute most-favorite short story collections. Ranging from WW II England to Montana ranch country to American suburbia, "Half in Love" explores just that, the nature of love between strangers, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives, fathers and sons.

Of all the stories, the most powerful (for this reader anyway) is "Red," the story of an American soldier in WW II England who is so desperate for warmth and beauty that he tries to "extract" some measure of happiness from a war widow, only to find that the damage of war is so insipid and far-reaching, that the best they can muster between them is grief.

What I admire so greatly about Maile Meloy is her precision, her spare, heartbreaking prose. She is not interested in wow-ing us with over-the-top poetic language, but with the subtle nuance of minimalism and restraint.

A must-read for all lovers of short stories, and all writers of them, too.

Ron says

This fine collection of stories is set mostly in Montana and were originally published in periodicals such as *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *Ploughshares*, and *The Ontario Review*. Many have the sharply detailed yet emotionally elusive quality of *New Yorker* fiction, for example the first two stories, "Tome" and "Four Lean Hounds, ca. 1976."

In the first, a lawyer must deal with a disabled client who takes hostage a young employee of the state agency that has handled his case. The ironic details and the unpredictable turns of plot provide a wonky comic surface to an undertone of sad melancholy. There's melancholy also in the second story, as a young husband discovers at the funeral of a dead business partner that his friend and his wife have had a clandestine affair.

The troubled relationships between husbands and wives are a theme that runs through most of the stories. In "Gunnison Junction," a pregnant not-yet-married woman recognizes the impulse to walk away from her husband-to-be without looking back. The same couple reappears 15 years later in "Thirteen & a Half," parents of an adolescent now and at odds over how to react to the presence of a runaway with a gun in their midst, being pursued by the local police.

In "Paint," a husband lies dying after an accident on the deck he's refinishing, while inside the house, his wife cannot hear his pleas for help. In "The River," set in Utah, an older man and his ailing wife's friend are unable to penetrate her refusal to acknowledge her failing health.

For the most part, characters spring clearly from the page, the Montana settings are especially vivid, and the stories are well told, well paced, and fiercely focused on the human condition and the sadness of the situations that ordinary people's lives have led them to. Also recommended: Richard Ford's "Rock Springs."
