



A Hatful of Cherries

Felix Calvino

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'Lively, moving, humorous, strange, these small records of other lives in another place are a gift, and so is the austere and tender mode of their telling. Calvino's is anew voice in the room, individual, arresting, and now that we have been aware of it, indispensable to the many others that make up our story' --David Malouf.

A Hatful of Cherries Details

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Grady says

Taut, Simple Stories that Linger

Félix Calvino deserves a much wider audience here in the United States. His collection of short stories here gathered under the title A HATFUL OF CHERRIES are piquant brief morsels that range from a few pages to extended stories and every story manages to paint imagery and place and character so clearly with the most economical style that each appears like a flashback of thought in every reader's memory bank.

Calvino was born in Galicia and spent his childhood on a farm not unlike those scenes he so frequently recalls in these stories. Under the reign of General Franco, Calvino fled to England to study and work and eventually migrated to Australia where he currently lives and writes his magical prose. From these various regions Calvino gathers the fodder for his tales - stories that take place in Spain and in Australia with settings that range from dealing with the earth as a child to discovering love as a youth to encountering the realities of small community prejudices to simply celebrating the aspects of the very young to the very aged characters he describes so well.

Calvino's writing style is the opposite of florid. With a few brief sentences on a few pages he is able to bring the reader into the focal point of his stories that usually take a quiet twist at the end, a technique that makes reading a collection of short stories more like reading a full length novel, so engrossed is the reader in his ability to capture attention and imagination. Not that his writing is without color: for instance, in the story 'An Old Sheep' he writes 'In the boredom of the long nights and the sweetness of warm beds, couples rejoiced in their labours for new life, while in the next room death was busily harvesting among the old.' He knows well how to speak of love, of desire, of tragedy and of humor and is equally at home with each of these and other emotions.

Some astute publisher should capture the talents of this Spanish Australian writer. He deserves center stage in the arena of authors who have mastered the art of writing short stories!

Grady Harp

Janet Baker says

The beauty of simplicity and honesty is combined with the skill powerful storytelling. Although the title of the book is taken from one of the stories, each story is like a cherry. One is not enough, each is a fragment. The stories are fragments in time resonating with the pain of love, loss, escape, loneliness but told in a fresh open style that makes each story glow. I was very sad to finish this beautiful little book.

Josephine Moore says

evocative short stories..

Cass Moriarty says

What a delight to discover Felix Calvino's short story collection, *A Hatful of Cherries*. Originally from Galacia in the northwest of Spain, Felix grew up on a farm but fled his homeland to avoid military service under General Franco. His eclectic mix of stories are inspired either by his memories of his childhood in that country, and the political, economic and cultural difficulties of the time, or by his experience as an immigrant to Australia in the sixties, and his subsequent life in this country.

Felix writes in a style that is spare, sparse and simple. He depicts everyday actions and situations with an experienced eye for detail and nuance. His descriptions of characters and of the weather and the landscape are concise and meticulous. The tension in each of his stories is taut; he engages the reader on a tightly held line, and reels us in slowly but deliberately to the resolution.

Each story is self-contained and complete, but all are open-ended - there remains a question, a possibility of further thought, at the conclusion of each.

I love the terrible inevitability of Basilio, the misunderstanding of Detour, the sharp childhood memories of The Pocketknife, the humour of An Old Sheep, the poignancy of *A Hatful of Cherries*, the playful familiarity and mirth of The Laundry Incident, the hopefulness of The Bride, the gritty depiction of addiction in Restless Hands, the imagination of Ghosts on the Beach, and the melancholy of Silvia, and of Unfinished Thoughts. This is a highly readable and appealing compilation that is moving, empathetic and engaging.

Haley Williams says

awsome and interesting

James says

In the native tongue of Tahiti, *Ponui* means "the immense night," the magical, creative, and dark womb from whence our dreaming, our lovemaking, and our visions of spirits blossom forth.

Haunting the soul of much Spanish literature dwells *Ponui* by another name: *duende*. *Duende* is 'aesthetic darkness.' Lorca wrote that "duende, then, is a power, not a work. It is a struggle, not a thought. I have heard an old maestro of the guitar say, 'The duende is not in the throat; the duende climbs up inside you, from the soles of the feet.' Meaning this: it is not a question of ability, but of true, living style, of blood, of the most ancient culture, of spontaneous creation." He suggests, "everything that has black sounds in it, has duende, i.e., emotional 'darkness.'" It is the erotico-spiritual darkness we come upon in these lines of Juan de la Cruz:

*En una noche oscura,
con ansias en amores inflamada,
(;oh dichosa ventura!)
salí sin ser notada,
estando ya mi casa sosegada.*

Immense, sense-consuming darkness, proclaims India's great scripture of Tantra yoga, *The Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*, simply does not support the quotidian, day-to-day thoughts that plague the mind of lovers of

immensity. So that on a moonless monsoon night, when one cannot make out even the nose of one's lover, the mind may find itself transcending into the most immense of mysteries -- beyond all thought.

And this is what is miraculous about these tales by Felix Calvino, a Spanish-Australian writer of great depth. These tenderly rendered, haunting, compassionate yarns, like those of the best Spanish writers, are often tinted with the indwelling, dark allure of *duende*. Yet, *duende* is felt in Felix's prose through his characters' day-to-day struggles with such fundamental givens as identity. And one senses in one's gut that with Felix it is not a question of ability, but of true living style, of blood, of the most ancient culture, of the writer's dark nostalgia for the millenia-old, mysterious ways of Spanish village life.

I invite you to acquaint yourself with this gifted writer. You will discover a deeply authentic voice. It may continue to haunt you long after you have read the last word.

J.

Anna says

A Hatful of Cherries is a collection of 16 short stories by Félix Calvino set in Australia and Galicia. I'm always apprehensive when I start reading short stories because I like to know a lot about the characters, and short stories don't give you a lot of room for character development. Calvino does a great job giving readers an idea of who his characters really are in just a few short pages. While I didn't get as attached to the characters in these stories in the way I would have had it been a novel, I felt satisfied with the details I was given about each of them.

My favorites stories in A Hatful of Cherries were "Basilio," a sad story of a man who picks up goods and sells them at market, traveling the dangerous post-Spanish Civil War roads while his wife worries about him at home, and "Sylvia," which follows two married men, best friends who share a lover. "Detour" focuses on a young man late to his engagement party when he detours to a more scenic route and his car breaks down in the rain. Calvino provides a shocking ending in just a few simple sentences.

Full review at [Diary of an Eccentric](#).

Terry mcintire says

it was really a effin amazing book

Kathryn Brimblecombe-Fox says

I have just finished 'A Hatful of Cherries' and loved it. Each story drew me in and I felt a connection to the characters. I felt so sad for Basilio and his wife. Really loved the 'Ghosts on The Beach' too. 'Silvia' was such a measured story, belying the strangeness of the two men sharing a mistress. Calvino's endings are really great, because he makes them astonishing, even when they are about ordinary happenings. The story about quitting smoking was painful to read, but gripping. I felt his frustration...and I have never smoked! The

‘Detour’ story has a film in it I am sure!

I also liked the way Calvino moved from stories set in Spain, to those set in Australia. It provided a rhythm that was punctuated every now and then...like jazz! I could not read more than two stories at one time, because I liked how they stayed with me for awhile.

Cassandra Kay Silva says

I like the title I think it fit very well with the collection. As a collection I thought it was cohesive and well thought through. The stories were nice, definitely some were very favorable. Perhaps each story needs to be rated individually though as a few of them I did not particularly enjoy. I do think they portrayed that essence of memory. That feeling of remembering an event in miniature. Perhaps my brain was a little to "attack kamikaze style" for this set though. If I were to re read them I would have preferred a lazy day at the beach or in the tub. I was reading them so crazily that I would get to the end of some of them (two pages) and go what? Wait what happened? Then I would have to re read it, and would almost harbor some kind of resentment to the piece or author for experience and anxiety of my own rushed ways. Unfair I know, and I took that into account when I rated it.
