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From the writer whose first novel, *Bright Lights, Big City*, defined a generation and whose seventh and most recent, *The Good Life*, was an acclaimed national best seller, a collection of stories new and old that trace the arc of his career over nearly three decades. In fact, the short story, as A. O. Scott wrote in *The New York Times Book Review*, shows “McInerney in full command of his gifts . . . These stories, with their bold, clean characterizations, their emphatic ironies and their disciplined adherence to sound storytelling principles, reminded me of, well, Fitzgerald and also of Hemingway—of classic stories like ‘Babylon Revisited’ and ‘The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber.’ They are models of the form.”

Only seven of these stories have ever been collected in a book, but all twenty-six unveil and re-create the manic flux of our society. Whether set in New England, Los Angeles, New York or the South, they capture various stages of adulthood, from early to budding to entrenched to resentful: a young man confronting the class system at a summer resort; a young woman holed up in a remote cabin while her (married) boyfriend campaigns for the highest office of all; a couple whose experiments in sexuality cross every line imaginable; an actor visiting his wife in rehab; a doctor contending with both convicts and his own criminal past; a youthful socialite returning home to nurse her mother; an older one scheming for her next husband; a family celebrating the holidays while mired in loss year after year; even Russell and Corrine Calloway, whom we first met in McInerney's novel *Brightness Falls*.

A manifold exploration of delusion, experience and transformation, these stories display a preeminent writer of our time at the very top of his form.

How It Ended: New and Collected Stories Details

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From Reader Review How It Ended: New and Collected Stories for online ebook

Joe says

The majority of these stories all follow similar themes: disintegrating marriages, adultery, and abortion - with a little bit of cigarette smoking and drug abuse thrown in for good measure. Let's hope McInerney isn't writing what he knows.

If nothing else it's curious to read the short story origins of some McInerney novels. He is a good writer and some of these stories really stuck with me - especially the post 9-11 stories like the guy who is with his mistress when the towers fall and his wife's fucked up revenge on him. Or the woman at a protest march against the war on terror.

Nothing more than mindless entertainment with no real substance.

Nancy says

I forgot how much I liked Jay McInerney until I read this collection of his short stories. I loved Bright Lights Big City when I read it in college. At the time I probably thought it was just really cool, since it took place in New York and the main characters drank a lot. Reading this collection reminds me that he is a great writer who happens to write about wealthy, unhappy people who drink a lot.

ron swegman says

When the name "Jay McInerney" is mentioned during a book talk the first three three things that come to most minds are: "Novelist," "New York," and "The Eighties."

McInerney's debut novel, "Bright Lights, Big City", was a critical and commercial success that encapsulated the atmosphere and social life of New York in the 1980's. The novel also created a lasting comparison to F. Scott Fitzgerald, who wrote a novel, "The Great Gatsby", that encapsulated the atmosphere and social life of New York in the 1920's.

Fitzgerald was a great American novelist, and he also wrote dozens upon dozens of short stories, some of which are considered the best American examples of the form: "Babylon Revisited", "May Day", and "The Rich Boy" being a few examples.

Enter again Jay McInerney. The novelist, it turns out, has slowly yet surely crafted a body of short stories, some of which should be considered the best American examples of the form.

After I first encountered the early novels of McInerney, I eagerly sought out other work, and there were a few stories to be found in magazines such as Esquire or The New Yorker. Several of these pieces were preliminary sketches of his novels, and these are included here. McInerney has stated in interviews that after the publication of his latest novel, "The Good Life", he became energized by the thought of finally releasing

a collection of short fiction to complement his novels and essays on wine. In "something of a sprint" of six months between the autumn of 2007 and the spring of 2008 he wrote a dozen new stories. Most of these sparkle with a combination of lyrical prose, even timing, and rich description. Themes of family life and the intricacies of multilateral romantic relationships predominate, yet all give glimpses into the human condition with honest emotion and pictorial clarity.

There are 26 stories in "How it Ended" -- roughly one for each year of his publishing career -- and the only flaw worth noting regarding this book is that it did . . . end. Here's hoping for more short fiction of similar high quality from Jay McInerney.

Holly Foley (Procida) says

The characters of this collection of stories truly reflect the "me" generation, where infidelity is mostly a game, wealth and status are very valued. The writing by Jay McInerney is sharp and edgy. I enjoyed this book despite the fact I couldn't relate to many of the characters' motives and actions. That made me glad.

Jane Tolman says

I didn't realize what a versatile writer Jay McInerney was until I read this book of short stories. I found myself reading about topics of no interest to me yet still being interested the way he wrote about the topic. And more than once, I was very impressed at his command of the English language and his ability to turn a phrase so well. I wish I could write like that.

Frances says

The stories collected in "How It Ended" by Jay McInerney span almost thirty years. They are assembled in no particular order and include McInerney's first published story as well as a number that he produced rapid fire in 2008. What struck me most about these stories is that I could never guess in what year each was written. I was almost always surprised by the date at the end. This disconcerted me. Rather than being illustrative of a particular style, it suggested stagnation.

The content and characters of "How It Ended" are particularly fascinated with wealth, beauty and too many drugs. McInerney excavates the terrain of infidelity with much the same vigor as John Updike applied to the subject. Trust in one's partner appears to be a naïve fantasy in almost every story, a fundamental I find depressing, inaccurate and a tad sensationalist.

The message in most of McInerney's stories is that his characters are by and large decent people with relatively good intentions. They just always seem to stray. Whether this means another drink, line of coke or affair, the repercussions are never too severe. Usually the protagonists come to in an alleyway they would prefer to avoid or are saddled with legal fees they want to ignore. The stakes of the aftermath rarely include consequences that might teach these wayward individuals a lesson.

A minor, almost silly, point that I have to mention is McInerney's utter lack of imagination in the department of names. Being drawn to striking and odd names myself, I was chagrined not only to be acquainted with the

regular Tom, Dick, and Harrys, but also with the repetition of monikers. I can understand using a non-descript name once for one protagonist, but then to have another character who takes center stage as well with the same boring name was much too uninspired for my liking.

McInerney roots most of his stories in New York, though there are a few trips to the lush South as well. The lives he describes are either full of riches and glamour or they concern people who are brushing against the linen lapels and satin skirt hems, hoping to get in with the proper crowd and experience the lush life, as is their apparent due. It was difficult for me to feel sympathetic toward anyone.

It was not difficult, however, for me to believe that these people exist. McInerney does not use fancy language to describe the fancy lives his characters live. This contributes to the credibility of the conversation and even makes the presence of a potbellied pig fathomable in the master bed. He paints the facts of his protagonists lives clearly, if coldly.

The stories are delivered in such a well-mannered and matter-of-fact tone that McInerney's intentions ultimately remain uncertain. Is he providing the reader with a peek into the lives of the inordinately wealthy in order to reveal the pitiable qualities of a life of excess and absurd and dangerous luxury? Or is the author asking that the reader to feel empathy for these characters, characters who are just as lost in their lives as those less fortunate financially?

My inclination was to be somewhat contemptuous. The love stories and indiscretions that McInerney recounts neither struck me in their simplicity, beauty or authenticity. These characters fell in or out of love due to boredom or because they lacked imagination. The tragedies and disappointments that these decisions inevitably led to appeared to be exactly what was deserved. As the collection progressed, I saw few characters develop any self-awareness and this rendered McInerney's rich far less valuable than their bank accounts would suggest.

<http://bookingaround.tumblr.com/>

Susan says

While I've never done bathtubs of cocaine (or any cocaine at all, unfortunately? Fortunately?), or lived in NYC, or been to socialite swank parties, that's okay! I can do all of these things through the magic of Jay McInerney.

If asked who my favorite author is, my pat answer has always been Tom Wolfe. Now, I'm not so sure. Maybe it's Jay McInerney, maybe it's not. I do know I'm about to embark on a McInerney glut, reading everything he's ever written in the next few months, including re-reading *Bright Lights*, *Big City*.

The only story that fell flat with me, and then only in the last few paragraphs, was *Con Doctor*. All the rest of the stories were my favorite; I have no especial favorite.

Debbie says

There's no denying that McInerney is a good storyteller, whose multi-faceted characters are believable and

often interesting. And yet it would be nice to see him write about something other than New York in the 80's, men who cheat and do drugs, high society and its flaws. I really can't relate to much of that, but that is not the problem. The stories are just too repetitive in terms of tone and setting.

Jennifer says

Good batch of short stories if you're looking for something as light and mood enhancing as the booze, drugs, and one night-cum-month long stands described in these stories. I'm not sure why the New York Times is so gushing in its praise of this book--it's good, but it's only slightly more interesting than the '80s coke tales he told back in the day (I was a big fan of those books--now, now as much). Compared to Brett Easton Ellis, McInerney offers far less sarcasm (and exploitation) in print, but in the end they share the same underlying cynicism of the rich, bored class. I think I just prefer Ellis' stories better.

Drew says

A terrific collection of short stories by a real master of the form. It's a bit of a history lesson/writing lesson - you get to see the stories that would later become *Bright Lights Big City* and *Story Of My Life* - but it's also just a lesson in the form. His preface talks about the form of short stories and he just nails it, even with the stories that are more dead weight than interesting.

There are only a few of those dead weight stories, you'll be happy to know, and most of them are absolutely brilliant. I'm not sure I can recall another short story collection where I felt entirely satisfied at the end of each story.

Plus, did you know that Alison Poole = Rielle Hunter? I KNOW, right?!

Anyway, an excellent collection for an early autumn weekend. I ramble on more about it, at some length, at Raging Biblioholism: <http://wp.me/pGVzJ-h7>

christa says

In Jay McInerney's world, men are writers with varying degrees of success. They are married to women who are pregnant, which may or may not stall their philandering. The wife typically knows what's up and either ignores it, aborts the child or asks the man to have his fairly healthy cat put to sleep as contrition. There is typically a back story salted with cocaine residue and lapsed catholicism. His newer stories always reference 9/11 in some capacity.

In Jay McInerney's world, no one leaves New York City. Maybe a character spent time in China modeling or teaching English, or maybe there was a stint in Los Angeles. But home is Manhattan, and now that McInerney has gotten older, he'll concede to characters with suburban address. But never the main characters.

"How It Ended: New And Collected Stories" reads a bit like a posthumous compilation. It is a mix of snippets of his old stuff -- including pieces from "*Bright Lights, Big City*," "*Brightness Falls*," and "*Model*

Behavior." This is fun and feels like reading an old yearbook. It has been years since I've read any of his novels, and it was a nice reminder of what's-so-big-about-McInerney. [Namely, that he writes about a time and place that I'd love to vacation in: New York City. 1980s. Writer cliques.]

Then he attempts to one-up the masterful feat that is "The Good Life" -- in which, 20 years after "Brightness Falls," he revisits the main characters Corrine and Russell -- and has them aged appropriately -- in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. In this compilation, he has a short story where Corrine runs into the character Luke from "The Good Life." Here, in the short story "The March," it seems a forced and pointless exercise. Hopefully the kind of thing that will show McInerney that if he wants another novel about Corrine and Russell, he should wait at least another decade.

McInerney also doubles back to Alison Poole, the star of "The Story Of My Life," who last year was outed as a character based on the woman who would become John Edwards' mistress. Here, in "Penelope on the Pond," Poole is hiding out from the press in an upscale hunting shack, waiting for text messages and phone calls from Tom, her married lover who is involved in politics. In novel form, "The Story Of My Life" McInerney does a bang up job of capturing the voice of an insecure 20 year old with expensive taste, daddy issues and financial problems. The fast-forward has dulled her a bit, although, admittedly, by the time most women hit 40, up-talking and "like" dropping taper off. And this Alison Poole has wizened up a bit, but isn't interesting enough to check in on, ironically enough considering the recent-ish tabloid coverage of her likeness.

Each of the stories seems a touch autobiographical. One finds four brothers, after the death of their mother, beating the shit out of each other at Thanksgiving. One brother is a playwright, whose recent play has the entire family wondering whether their mother had an affair with their father's best friend. Another has a man and his wife sharing their bed with a pet pig. The man only recognizing this as ridiculous when he is removed from it and sharing the story with a therapist. In another, an aged Lothario is about to get married. First he has some unfinished business with four lines of cocaine, cut with his Soho Club card, and an exlover looking for closure.

It should be sad: That McInerney continues to write about men for whom fidelity is a phase that only lasts until the vet's assistant slips the character her phone number. It's a little like watching a middle-aged man navigate the produce department in his high school letter jacket. Saying "Oh, yeah?" to the kid bagging his groceries. "You shoulda seen the model I bagged in '87." But I'm a bit like a former cheerleader from that very same high school, who would see McInerney squeezing tomatoes and become dazed. Then immediately text my best friend: "OMG, just saw j-mac at the GS."

Bookmarks Magazine says

Compared by critics to such literary giants as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, J. D. Salinger, and Graham Greene, McInerney has demonstrated impressive depth and range over the last three decades, and most critics valued *How It Ended* as a record of McInerney's evolution as a writer. Retaining his mordant humor and panache alongside hard-won wisdom and maturity, McInerney dissects the ambitions and excesses of youth as they yield to the limitations and moderation of middle age. He revisits his signature themes—drugs, infidelity, and social climbing—and creates likeable, if self-absorbed, characters. Though the *San Francisco Chronicle* claimed that the newer stories felt rushed and other reviewers were annoyed by McInerney's fascination with name brands and labels, *How It Ended* should please fans and newcomers alike.

This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

Abby says

This is a strange collection of short stories, with sloppy generalizations (e.g., use of the expression "in the cups" to denote being depressed) and stereotypical characters (e.g., the insinuation that black men smoke Newport cigarettes and are socioeconomically and sexually threatening).

Women also get short shrift in McInerney's fiction. They are idealized as unattainable angels (and dead mothers) or portrayed as sexual objects to conquer or discard.

McInerney may think he's a modern-day F. Scott Fitzgerald, except with cocaine and NYC instead of Prohibition-era booze at Princeton. But he takes himself too seriously, and his characters not seriously enough.

Curtis says

(4.5 Stars) *How it Ended* is Jay McInerney's outstanding collection of twenty-six short stories that span from 1982 to 2008. Prior to this expansive short story collection I had never read McInerney, despite the success of *Bright Lights*, *Big City*, *Story of My Life*, and *The Good Life*. After finishing *How it Ended* I seriously regret not reading him sooner. These stories were exactly what I hoped they would be - smart, witty, and bittersweet. In a 2009 New York Times article, "Generation of Benders, Some Tabs Paid in Full," journalist Janet Maslin wrote that McInerney had, "A party-guy reputation borne out by the elements (drugs, infidelity, name dropping and social climbing) that loom large in his fiction. And an etiquette that dictates that when a woman is about to snort cocaine, a gentleman helps by holding back her hair." That more or less sums up this collection best.

Melissa says

OK, so here's one of my guilty literary pleasures. I absolutely love me some Jay McInerney. I adore the guy and his writing, and have for quite some time. But here's the thing about me and McInerney: as much as I hate to admit it, I've come to the conclusion that I can only take him in smallish doses, and *How It Ended: New and Collected Stories* confirms that theory. This is not a collection of stories that is meant to be read straight through, as I did over the New Years weekend. (Especially over such a weekend made for debauchery such as New Years.)

By page 110 or so of this collection of stories, I felt like I needed to check myself into the likes of the Betty Ford Clinic because I was feeling in need of a detox. The coke! The parties! The beautiful people! The affairs! New York! It's all here, and it's the stuff that Jay McInerney's stories are made of (and why I love him so).

Escaping into a McInerney book is like spending an evening in the company of that friend of yours who is

living la vida loca - you know, the one who goes to all the great concerts and all the cool parties, the One Who Has A Life while you're in your PJs by 7 p.m. It's fun, in a way, to live vicariously through such people, which again, is why these stories are good but just not read back to back.

The characters in these stories are, for the most part, gorgeous and rich and incredibly lonely and sad. They're adulterers. They're living in the aftermath of the 80s and 9/11. Several make re-appearances from their starring roles in other McInerney novels (notably, Russell and Corrine Calloway from *Brightness Falls* and Alison from *Story of My Life*).

How It Ended is comprised of 26 stories. In my opinion, among the best are:

"The Madonna of Turkey Season" about a family struggling to celebrate the holidays each year after the passing of their mother;

"Sleeping with Pigs", a brilliant story about a woman's fetish for sleeping with a pig and how that is connected with her grieving her deceased brother;

"My Public Service," about an idealistic staffer on a political campaign who quickly becomes jaded;

"The Queen and I," about the enduring spirit of friendship over family;

"Con Doctor," about a doctor in a prison who can't come to terms with his own past;

"I Love You, Honey," about the lengths one will go for revenge and possessiveness, and

"Getting in Touch with Lonnie," where a celebrity gets a surprise when visiting his wife in a rehab clinic.
