



Me and My Daddy Listen to Bob Marley

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On the heels of the popular and critical success of her 2007 novel *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, centered on mountaintop removal and its effect on a single family, Ann Pancake returns to her native West Virginia to tell stories of other folks caught at the same difficult interface.

In “Rockhounds,” nine-year-old Joslyn must divide her sympathies between the old ways of her fossil-hunting grandfather and the scientific approach of his college educated son. It is her Uncle Derek who’s stolen the body of their family dog to take to Charleston to prove the water in their creek has been poisoned. With perfectly poised equanimity, Jos witnesses both her grandfather’s grief and her uncle’s rage at his parents for signing this leasing deal, done in part, simply to be neighborly.

Ann Pancake’s ear for dialect of these mountain people is perfect, her respect that of one who writes from the heart of this world. These are folks caught in the complexities of rural economies where there are no quick fixes to questions surrounding right livelihood. With first-hand knowledge of this world and her exquisite depictions of its natural history she may put you in mind of Daniel Woodrell.

Me and My Daddy Listen to Bob Marley Details

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From Reader Review Me and My Daddy Listen to Bob Marley for online ebook

Joanna says

This books was.. dissatisfying..

It was not poorly written, don't get me wrong. It was finely crafted and beautiful that way.

You know how many stories finish with the character at a crossroads and can either change their life or hang out on their mediocre path? This is one of those, except.. they don't change their life.. they don't make it better.. you get the feeling they are going to continue down this path of self destruction they're currently on..

It's just dissatisfying.

Crckt says

pancake is definitely a colorful and descriptive writer. the settings she conjures are rich; sometimes bleak, sometimes bewildered, a hint of an undefined darkness in all of them. it almost seems as if she feels an obligation to set each and every one of these stories in her WV home. i found that detail a mite tiresome. regardless, the voices of appalachian poor folk are among those too often ignored. what the stories possessed in richness of imagery and tone, they lacked in structure and actual storytelling. for me, much of this collection read as writing exercises and not fully developed stories. i will say that as i progressed through the book i thought the stories became more enjoyable. the title (and final) story i found particularly strong. it along with the others that resonated with me most had child protagonists. i enjoyed the book, on some levels, but it was a bit of a slog for me to power through it.

Gina Whitlock says

Ann Pancake writes about West Virginians dealing with the tragic loss of the lands, poisoned streams, mining companies, and fracking. The stories she tells are bleak, depressing and sometimes funny. I enjoyed all the stories. They are rich with tragedy, poverty and survival.

Rhonda Browning White says

I would quickly give this collection of novellas (2) and short stories (9) a total of 4.5 stars, if that option were available. The stories herein are powerful, stunning, and at times, heartbreaking. Pancake writes of the working poor, of blue-collared people who suffer injustices while still (usually) holding their heads high, and if for that fact alone, this collection deserves a place on your bookshelf.

I only reserve the other half-star from my rating because, for my taste, a couple of the stories felt slow to me; I would have preferred that the pacing be a little more amped, that the writing would have been a bit tighter.

Overall, however, the writing itself is poetic regional dialect, and Pancake uses it to lull the reader before slapping them upside the head with some important truth. That's an amazing skill for a writer to have and hone.

Favorites included the title story, "In Such Light", and "Arsonists", though there's not a bad one in the batch.

While Pancake's West Virginia is similar in some ways to my own experiences of being born and raised there, it doesn't depict those residents of the mountain state who thrive there--those who are successful business owners or who are otherwise gainfully employed (not necessarily as coal miners, either) and who are happy to own farms and homes there. There are always three sides to every story, and while I loved this collection, I interpreted the stories as skewed only toward one of those sides. Still, that's the side that doesn't always have a voice, and in that aspect, Pancake does a fabulous job of lending her own.

Ellen says

Well I am very impressed. This is an excellent follow-up to *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, which has long been on my list of favorite books. The characters in this feel very realistic, and I was blown away by certain things, particularly the ending of the titular story at the conclusion of the book. (It's an awesome story about finding a way to stand up against abuse. I love it.)

Some other favorites:

In Such Light, a great beginning with some fascinating explorations of characters and their class dynamics. *Dog Song*, a sad and fascinating study of a very odd character (a lot of the protagonists in this collection are sort of oddballs; but probably those in *Dog Song* and *Sugar's Up* take the cake, but it's fascinating how their individual strangenesses are portrayed in diverse ways from each other).

Rhanda says

This collection of West Virginia-set stories opens hot with the novella "In Such Light," but is ultimately quite uneven. The good stories are quite good, with "Mouseskull," "Arsonists" and the titular "Me and My Daddy Listen to Bob Marley" the standouts in my opinion. The rest of the collection -- mostly the shorter stories -- gets too bogged down in creative writing course Appalachian patois and a few odd pacing and character decisions, so much so that the architecture of the stories becomes a distraction from the story itself. The stronger pieces largely make up for those missteps, however, making for a satisfying read.

Jessie says

It's great to have another Ann Pancake book in the world. The solid and luminous prose I found in *Given Ground* and *Strange As This Weather* persists here; I love the mix of long-breathing novellas mixed with the shorter stories that are one exhalation. Always layered, always with "live coal" characters, wasting time on nothing that doesn't go for the jugular. Ann especially writes the deep knowing of children with such full-body power and instinct.

Going through all my dogearing today—here, in “Sab”: “You only have room when loss lightens you.” (259)

“Mouseskull”: “I hold the skull between finger and thumb to gaze in the sockets of its eyes, stroke its nose, rub its forehead the way my horse books say horses like to be rubbed.” (76)

Opening of “Coop”: “They bunked in old chicken houses jammed with older iron beds, lumpy-ticked, stained, summers and summers of homesick child urine, then the rat and the swallow dirt all empty winter. The beds pressed so tight the girls who brought suitcases had to sleep with them, so tight Carly could shift an elbow and touch the girl beside her.”

Melissa Sharp says

In this collection of short stories and novellas, Ann Pancake sets her stories in the gritty Appalachia backdrop of West Virginia. She gives us authentic voices of characters navigating addiction, loss, disability and the various woes of life. Her stories are funny, heartbreakingly honest and full of worldly wisdom.

Ruth says

Just couldn't get into it. I tried.

Camille Chidsey says

The writing was incredible and I easily could have given this book a 5, but I didn't love all of the stories although they were written extremely well. Definitely interested in reading her other books.

Claire says

These stories cover hard subject matter--poverty, fracking & mining and their toll on families, communities and the land--but they are beautifully rendered in prose reflective of Pancake's fierce and tender love for West Virginia.

Star says

Ann Pancake writes above me and below me and makes me want to dig deeper and reach higher as a reader and as a writer. This goes in my read again (and again) stacka lacka.

from page 96:

"Others went full-blaze, gaping open now, their charred rooms exposed—a pitiful vulgar to it, Dell can't help but feel. Others are nothing but steps climbing to rubble-cluttered concrete slabs. The kudzu already covering. Overhead, the flattened hills roll in dead slumps, like men's bodies cold-cocked, Dell sees them when he brings himself to look, like men knocked out. The humps of their twisted shoulders, their arms and legs drunk-flung. Them sprouting their sharp foreign grass.

The company is finished with Tout, West Virginia, now.

Suzanne Moore says

Anne Pancake creates unique and interesting characters ... beginning with Janie, "the popcorn girl," who is companion (somewhat caretaker) of her older/mentally challenged uncle and begins dating Nathan, banker by day/biker by night. Janie's story, *In Such Light*, opens the book and is probably my favorite. I kept reading because of the strong opening in this collection. Although there were some stories that kept my interest, not all were memorable. That said I would still recommend trying these if you read *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and liked it. With most stories set in West Virginia, these characters reflect similar predicaments as those in her novel. For instance: there are environmental concerns in *Rockhound* when Bunker, a beloved pet, is thought to have died after drinking contaminated water. Many of the stories contain impoverished or underprivileged situations, and do make reading parts hard if you are a sensitive person. I reminded myself that this is a reflection of reality for some. I was intrigued by the little girl in *Mouseskull*, who wore a necklace of a mouse's skull and took comfort in smelling its "corspy" odor. I also enjoyed the perspective of little boy in the title story, who felt peace when listening to Bob's music ... "wet we wissen." His action-figure play took him away from harsh surroundings, and refrains of the reggae great reminded him that "every little thing is gonna be alright .."

Karen says

too real

Christopher says

A collection of stories set in Appalachia as hard and melancholy as a Kris Kristofferson concert set list. I liked all the stories, but in particular "The Following" and "Sab".

"And how much can life take from you? Sull, your livelihood, lovers, beauty, reputation, dignity. Me, my son, husband, breasts, innocence, righteousness, security. And I am not an ignorant woman. The whole world, I know, is losing, too. Rivers drying, mountains toppling, cities drowning under storms, and not many miles from here, in woods like these, they are even shattering the underground.

But still the land sings. And not just a singing, but louder, stronger, I tell you, every month it gets easier to hear. Because-listen-when everything is losing, everything is lightening, the distance between us thins and sheds. This is what loss gives. In these delicate, sharp and beautiful, these brilliant unraveling days." - Anne Pancake, "Sab"

