



Your Duck Is My Duck: Stories

Deborah Eisenberg (Author, Narrator) , Wallace Shawn (Narrator) , Julianne Moore (Narrator) , Josh Hamilton (Narrator)

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6 Hours and 55 Minutes

A much-anticipated collection of brilliantly observant short stories from one of the great American masters of the form, performed by a remarkable cast: Deborah Eisenberg, Julianne Moore, Josh Hamilton, and Wallace Shawn.

At times raucously hilarious, at times charming and delightful, at times as solemn and mysterious as a pond at midnight, Deborah Eisenberg's stories gently compel us to confront the most disturbing truths about ourselves—from our intimate lives as lovers, parents, and children, to our equally troubling roles as citizens on a violent, terrifying planet.

Each of the six stories in *Your Duck is My Duck*, her first collection since 2006, has the heft and complexity of a novel. With her own inexorable but utterly unpredictable logic and her almost uncanny ability to conjure the strange states of mind and emotion that constitute our daily consciousness, Eisenberg pulls us as if by gossamer threads through her characters—a tormented woman whose face determines her destiny; a group of film actors shocked to read a book about their past; a privileged young man who unexpectedly falls into a love affair with a human rights worker caught up in an all-consuming quest that he doesn't understand.

In Eisenberg's world, the forces of money, sex, and power cannot be escaped, and the force of history, whether confronted or denied, cannot be evaded. No one writes better about time, tragedy and grief, and the indifferent but beautiful universe around us.

Your Duck Is My Duck: Stories Details

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Download and Read Free Online Your Duck Is My Duck: Stories Deborah Eisenberg (Author, Narrator) , Wallace Shawn (Narrator) , Julianne Moore (Narrator) , Josh Hamilton (Narrator)

From Reader Review Your Duck Is My Duck: Stories for online ebook

Jill Meyer says

I'm usually not one for short stories. How many writers can put a mini-story - with characters and plots - into the 50 or so pages most short stories run? But Deborah Eisenberg has written six mini-stories that are incredibly readable in her new book, "Your Duck is My Duck".

I didn't like all six of the stories; I thought "The Third Tower" was a bit too science-fictiony for my taste. But the others, and most particularly "Recalculating", were tiny gems which were like snapshots into the characters' lives. In "Recalculating", Adam a young man raised on an Iowan farm, discovers an uncle he had never known while going through family pictures. Philip had left the farm early and had moved "away", returning only once. A few years pass and Adam is out of college and beginning his own journey away from Iowa. He hears about his now-famous uncle's death in London and decides to go to his memorial service. The time is the 1980's and Philip's family back home had been told he had died of "pneumonia". Adam's trip to London enmeshes him in Philip's world - a world he finds to his liking. The characters in "Recalculating" are brilliantly drawn; spare but full of life.

The other five stories are as well written as "Recalculating". I'm going to look for Eisenberg's backlist.

Evan says

How are you these days, they asked, and at this faint suggestion that they'd been monitoring me, a great wave of childish gratitude and relief washed over me, dissolving my dignity and leaving me stranded in self-pity.

I'd brought my computer, but maybe I could actually just not turn it on, and the dreary growth of little obligations that overran my screen would just disappear; maybe the news, which---like a magic substance in a fairy tale---was producing perpetually increasing awfulness from rock-bottom bad, would just disappear.

No wonder I couldn't sleep---who would allow themselves to go to sleep, with all the stupid, rotting brain trash that would be waiting for you when you got there!

So, you're born, and then what? Outside, the ocean glitters. From here on, it's all wide and empty, you can't see where the water meets the sky, you can't see what's written on the pale sheet of air. The sun's magnificent salvos announce each day and its close---one by one the unprecedented, irretrievable sheets of writing are revealed, then discarded.

The tether snapped and I shot upward, wafting around for a moment outside of Earth's gravitational pull, then dropped heavily back down into my chair next to my supper, cracks branching violently through my equanimity, from which my family, such as it was, came seeping.

"How do you suggest we measure the life of a human being?" I said. "By weight? Would that be less primitive? By volume? By votes? By distance commuted? By lamentations? By beauty?"

Flower to fruit to bare branch, sun to wan star---who am I to complain? The laws are the laws.

All right---so, you're walking around in a cloud of facts that are visible only to others. This has become

evident to me. Your eyes blink, like a doll's, you can move your arms and legs, you can even cry or wet yourself, but you weren't born like a doll in a box, with a little card that says things about you, and if you want to know how it is that you arrived on this planet of ours, you can't just sit around blinking like a doll.

Yes, off they go, my old allies, sailing right through the harsh, radiant shield at the edge of the universe, blending into darkness.

And it's true that Felix always has the same expression---pretty much all the old people do---of vague helplessness, as though they've just entered a day full of the troubles they've spent the night dreaming about.

The day, so fresh and glistening, seemed to contain every summer that had ever been and to promise more, endless more.

Almost every bit of the world was unknown to him; almost every bit of it---past, present, and future---lay beyond the dome of his consciousness, invisible to him and unimagined, and yet just as real as anything his imagination could encompass. A phantom horizon shot out all around him, a sparkling, mist of sky and water, in which faint continents were rising. The planet turned to sky, dotted everywhere with people and animals. Oop---there went a mastodon, lifting off Earth's surface into the clouds!

Still, there was always the feeling that one would get around to being young again. And that when one was young again, life would resume the course from which it had so shockingly deviated.

David says

Engrossing stories. Longer than I'm used to for short stories, but they make great use of their length. So much going on, but all tied together meticulously and naturally. Moving and a pleasure to read.

Kathryn Bashaar says

Lots to love in these stories. Gorgeous writing; a tornado is a "dancer filled with God." Oh!! And weighty themes, like the destructiveness of late capitalism, are subtly woven into the narrative.

But I am an old-fashioned lover of plot, and the plots in these stories were mostly thin. Also, in most of the stories, you're not sure where you are in time and place, and I find that disconcerting. I felt especially at sea reading "The Third Tower," in which a teenage girl is sent to "the city" (which she never glimpses) to be treated for dizziness. I can see what Eisenberg is trying to do. I think she is trying to tempt her readers to just experience the stories, without the preconceived notions that a firmly-drawn setting might inspire. I can respect that. It just made the stories less enjoyable for me.

There were a couple of stories in this collection that I enjoyed more than others. My favorite was "Recalculating," about a farm boy attending the funeral of a gay uncle who had long ago left the American prairie for Europe. I also liked "Merge." The contrast between Celeste's depth and Keith's shallowness was very poignant.

Many of these stories involve subtle confrontations between younger people and the aged: Keith and Celeste caring for Cordis in "Merge," Adam's becoming acquainted with his uncle's friends in "Recalculating," the conflict between the narrator and her mother in "Cross Off and Move On." In "Taj Mahal," Emma is the daughter of a late movie star who reunites with her mother's version of the Brat Pack when another younger relative writes a cheesy expose about them.

Although these aren't the kind of stories I generally love, I'm glad I read them and I respect Eisenberg's

artistry.

Like my reviews? Check out my blog at <http://www.kathrynbashaar.com/blog/>

Author of The Saint's Mistress: <https://www.bing.com/search?q=amazon....>

Anca says

I adored the title story, and the last two stories, which were gorgeous and wild, with a beating heart. I learned much from these three stories, by a writer so admired by writers I admire. I found the second story stuffed with characters I could not connect with, and the others similarly difficult to get into, but I'm so glad I finally began to read Eisenberg and look forward to reading more of her stories.

Chaitra says

The short that sold the book was *Merge*. I think this is the most stylized of the stories, it goes on about the concept of language while demonstrating how difficult it is for three people who use the same language to understand each other, and for me, was the best of the lot. The rest were very good as well, with honorable mentions to *Recalculating*, in which a young man attends a memorial of an uncle he's never known but is well loved by countless others, and *Cross Off and Move On* about a girl and her mom and her three aunts. I have not read Eisenberg before, but I do have *Twilight of the Superheroes* on my TBR, and it's about time I get around to it.

Bonnie says

Eisenberg is clearly a talented writer, but I'd put her in the category of a writer's writer (comparable to a poet's poet). A writer's writer is someone other writers admire for their style. She doesn't engage her readers with wonderful characters or a compelling plot. Her turns of phrase are original but they don't always work (I don't have the book in front of me, as it was a library book that I've returned, so I can't give examples). For my taste, she's too original: somewhat pretentious and mannered.

Catie says

"It's not so hard to figure out why I'm not sleeping. What I can't figure out is why everybody else is sleeping."

"Still, there was always the feeling that one would get around to being young again. And that when one was young again, life would resume the course from which it had so shockingly deviated."

Sue says

The past week I have been in thrall to Deborah Eisenberg's new book of just six stories. I could have

finished the book more quickly, but each of the stories in *Your Duck is My Duck* was so complex, so suggestive of multiple ideas, that I never read more than one story each evening. Then I reread a couple. In fact, I began with the audio version, read by the author and other distinguished voices, but I quickly checked out a library copy so that I could both read and listen. In “Taj Mahal,” for example, there are shifting voices and times, and I appreciated the visual clues – horizontal lines and italics – which guided my reading. In this story about the unreliability of memory, the principal character seemed at first to be the memoirist, but the characters in his memoir took the story away from him. It was unclear whose memories were “right.”

I read somewhere that Eisenberg’s stories are as dense as novels. I wish I knew who said that, for I would like to give credit. It is exactly what I kept thinking. They are also stories for someone who does not mind ambiguity.

Usually, the premise is simple, and a scene unfolds. Then the story takes a turn, probably darkening. Frequently the real topic is power – political or financial – but the power is unseen, hidden, ominous. A son has a glimpse of a more moral life, but his father holds the purse strings. A simple girl with uncommon imagination is considered “not normal” by a harsh medical system. In other stories, lingering memories and family have a powerful grip.

The title of the book is the same as that of the first story. It is from a Zen riddle. A Zen master, his disciple and a duck are trapped in a bottle. The master’s lesson is this: “It’s not my duck, it’s not my bottle, it’s not my problem.” The two artists in this story, a painter and a puppeteer, benefit from the largesse of patrons who have done all manner of bad deeds – desecrating the landscape, uprooting peasants. They are unsure what to do: “It’s not so hard to figure out why I’m not sleeping. What I can’t figure out is why everybody else is sleeping.” Your duck is my duck. We must all take responsibility.

I had a rather personal reaction to “The Third Tower,” which may be the case for many readers, because Eisenberg leaves gaps for one to fill in. A teenage girl who resides in a fantasy world but has a remarkable imagination is seen by a harsh physician as having “aberrant cortical activity” and is put through treatment to make her “normal.” But almost immediately her flights of fancy struck me as being much like what I would imagine dementia to be. A beloved relative, in her 90s and on the precipice of losing her grip on reality, told me with sadness and wonder that she was no longer sure what was real and what was a dream. It was a profoundly melancholy moment. What is normal? How do we show kindness to those whose minds are different?

Deborah Eisenberg bears witness to a corrupt world but also to a deep humanity. The library book will go back, but fortunately the audio stays on my phone. I will listen occasionally, when my heart can stand it.

Chris Roberts says

Never mind the woman her sentences styled,
forget her contemplative walks across the mind,
Deborah Eisenberg's disturbing of societal mores,
her characters are chained to ritual and ruin.

The author scares up any and all, in order to obfuscate non-extant plots.

Raise me up...

Chris Roberts, God of Impossibilities

Rick Slane says

I thought the title was the best thing about this.

Doug says

As with all short story collections, this is rather a mixed bag - some great selections ('Taj Mahal' and 'Recalculating' were the standouts) and a few duds (most notably, the longest story, 'Merge'). This was my first brush with Eisenberg, but on the strength of this, I'd read more.

Dave says

A handful of intimate glimpses of the bizarre world of rich New Yorkers, told in conversational prose.

Some of the stories are a bit stream-of-consciousness and you have a hard time following which character is which or what the hell is going on, but the personality and identity still shine through. Eisenberg is fabulous at conveying humanity - the feelings and experiences are fresh and real, even when they're foreign; but I've forever lost my desire to be a wealthy Manhattanite.

Carol says

Enjoyed each story, and each has pieces of brilliance, but the only story I found completely gratifying was "Cross Off And Move On". That story is almost perfect, strongly encourage you to read it.

Tom Evans says

Deborah Eisenberg is a master of her craft. I was amazed by how layered and intricate each story was, characters so complex and developed in such a short span of time.

These stories achieve depth and meaning which many authors spend a whole novel to achieve, Cross Off and Move On & The Third Tower were two stand outs for me in this collection, both ones I'll be coming back to. A clear choice for the NYT Notable Books of 2018.
