



We've Already Gone This Far

Patrick Dacey

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A heartfelt, vital collection; the debut of an exciting new talent already hailed as one of George Saunders' "favorite young American writers"

In Patrick Dacey's stunning debut, we meet longtime neighbors and friends--citizens of working-class Wequaquet--right when the ground beneath their feet has shifted in ways they don't yet understand. Here, after more than a decade of boom and bust, love and pride are closely twinned and dangerously deployed: a lonely woman attacks a memorial to a neighbor's veteran son; a dissatisfied housewife goes overboard with cosmetic surgery on national television; a young father walks away from one of the few jobs left in town, a soldier writes home to a mother who is becoming increasingly unhinged. *We've Already Gone This Far* takes us to a town like many towns in America, a place where people are searching for what is now an almost out-of-reach version of the American Dream

Story by story, Dacey draws us into the secret lives of recognizable strangers and reminds us that life's strange intensity and occasional magic is all around us, especially in the everyday. With a skewering insight and real warmth of spirit, Dacey delivers that rare and wonderful thing in American fiction: a deeply-felt, deeply-imagined book about where we've been and how far we have to go.

We've Already Gone This Far Details

Date : Published February 16th 2016 by Henry Holt and Co.

ISBN : 9781627794657

Author : Patrick Dacey

Format : Hardcover 224 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Fiction, Literary Fiction, Literature, American, Short Story Collection

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From Reader Review We've Already Gone This Far for online ebook

Marilyn says

This book follows people in a small town, anytown, USA, will do. The stories overlap occasionally but mostly what I liked about this book were the feelings that were evoked by the situations. One could relate to a lot of what goes on in the lives of the characters. There is one story of a frustrated woman who buries a flag of a neighbor whose son was killed in the military. There is another of a woman who debases herself to lose weight on tv, only to find that happiness is right in front of you, all you have to do is look. Stories about animals, stories about families (functional and dysfunctional) all make for a very enjoyable read. I was fortunate enough to receive an Advanced Reader's Copy of this book.

sue says

I have been reading some short stories lately to break my habit of thinking that you can't get 'good well established stories in such small parcels' but most times, the ones I have chosen to read have been quite good, good to excellent in the realms of the length of them.

These stories had some really live heart pulsing characters in it. Based around Massachusetts with people from all walks of life and their lives just not working out the way they planned or wanted them to be.

People are searching for an out of reach American dream.

Strange things creep up on us out of the blue, and this can be seen within many of the short stories inside this book.

Lori L (She Treads Softly) says

We've Already Gone This Far by Patrick Dacey is a highly recommended, impressive debut collection of 13 interconnected short stories.

Most of the stories are set in the small town of Wequaquet, Massachusetts, or the characters are from Wequaquet. Several of the characters appear in more than one story, which enhances the effect of the individual stories and makes the emotional impact of the collection stronger when considering the whole collection in totality. There is a wistful poignancy in several of the stories - parts are funny and yet heartbreaking. These stories deal with small town life, the reality and the tough times, the struggles and minor victories, the petty grievances and accomplishments but Dacey has compassion for his characters.

The writing is superb in this collection. I fully enjoyed the majority of the stories. There were only a couple stories that were a miss for me.

Contents:

Patriots: A neighbor closely watches and passes judgement on her neighbor across the street who has flags out to support the troops and her son. "[S]he's a hairstylist—actually a haircutter. She works at Uppercuts, and what they did to my hair once was not styling."

To Feel Again the Kind of Love That Hurts Something Terrible: An alcoholic father drives his son, Kenny, to a date. His son seems to be on the autism spectrum. "He started over, from the beginning. Because it had to be right, or else everything would go wrong. Casanova! He stood up and walked over to the dying maple near the edge of the lawn. Leaves fell in the slight breeze. He plucked a few from the ground, crumpled them in his hand, and shoved the bits into his mouth. The orange ones tasted best. There weren't many orange ones left."

Downhill: "Jasper was born blind. He's four years old now and very curious. I make up a lot of things." A father tries to make the world exciting for his blind son.

Friend of Mine: Coach Linnehan shoots the bunnies playing in his yard while a young man watches. The two end up bonding during an odd day.

Never So Sweet: A young boy's uncle is killed and his girlfriend, Tutti, stays at their house.

Ballad: A song writer talking to his baby. "it's her birthday she doesn't want a slit-your-wrists song and she doesn't want some loopy gumball sing- along a ballad of course ballad in D too light ballad in E minor too dark ballad in C C to F to D C to F to G something's missing C to F to A minor to G that's it that makes sense there's a balance there okay C to F to A minor to G for a while and squawking squawking why are you upset buddy why are you hiccuping now and that cute- as-hell... "

The Place You Are Going To: "Wallace Prager left Wequaquet early Sunday morning and drove three days straight, making good time to Buffalo Gap and Rapid City before heading south toward Casper, Wyoming." A man promises to send postcards to his daughter.

Mutatis Mutandis: A woman goes on a reality TV show for a complete cosmetic surgery makeover. "The reason why I went on The Dr. Jack Show in the first place? I wanted happiness. I thought maybe happiness had something to do with how I felt on the inside and how I felt on the inside had something to do with how I looked on the outside."

Acts of Love: Two men whose marriages are ending meet in a run-down apartment building.

Incoming Mail: A collection of letters a mother writes to her son who is fighting in Iraq.

Okay See You Soon Thanks for Coming: "Dad pulls up in his Lincoln Navigator with his new girlfriend, Roxy. She has spiky black and blond hair and makeup to match her hair and a loose blouse, so loose that when she breaks her heel in the pothole in the driveway, one of her big fake boobs pops out. Makes me laugh so hard I can barely breathe."

Frieda, Years Later: Leonard Putter is having trouble in his marriage and decides to take a secret vacation to see his high school girlfriend.

Lost Dog: This is the story of what happened to the woman's son in Iraq. "There are times when absolutely nothing is happening. That's when you know something's about to happen. You hear F-17s flying overhead, the sound like tearing paper."

Disclosure: My Kindle edition was courtesy of Henry Holt & Company for review purposes.

<http://shetreadssoftly.blogspot.com/2...>

Angela M says

I'm trying to read more short story collections since there have been so many published recently getting stellar reviews from readers like me who have not been a fan of short fiction. My lament is always the same - they are just not long enough and I frequently feel left in the lurch wondering what will happen to these characters that I've just barely come to know. I have to admit that this is pretty much how I felt after reading most of these these stories. Having said that , I did connect with some of the characters and was impacted by the recurring themes of loss of loved ones, loss of one's old self, loss of better times, parental love and the gut wrenching ache when your child has a disability.

In this place called Wequaquet near Centerville MA , Patrick Dacey beautifully portrays loss and sometimes a melancholy desire for a better time in the past . I felt a knot in my chest for many of these characters whose lives had not turned out quite the way they wanted , who were going through some tough times . Two of the stories have children with disabilities. Another recurring theme is financial stress with loss of work . In two other stories, we meet women coping with loss of husbands either by death or abandonment and finding themselves alone. There was only one story that I didn't even finish titled, "Ballad", kind of a stream of consciousness piece without punctuation.

I liked that there were people connections between the some of the stories in addition to the connection of the place . 3.5 stars has to be rounded up to 4 because even though, I still struggle with shorter fiction, several of these characters left an impact on me and I have to rate it on that.

Thanks to Henry Holt & Company and NetGalley.

Diane S ? says

Another to add to the wonderful collection of short stories I have read this year. Liking very much this new trend of linked stories, this one in a working class town of Massachusetts, where the old timers are stuck reliving the past, while the young people leave and progress marches on. Sort of what has happened to my town since we have lived here, farmland bought, new big stores move in, but at least our downtown area has mostly stayed the same, with small shops etc.

Well written, with the common theme of tough times and trying to work through them. A few I didn't like, one is a sort of stream of consciousness run on sentence, which didn't work for me. The one I can't quit thinking about is the father of a young blind boy who gives him different ways of seeing, while losing his job as a car salesman. Very touching story. The last story is a loner story, but well done just the same. There is even a bit of tongue in cheek humor.

Dacey is definitely a writer to watch.

Erin says

This is a very well written collection of short stories that all surround characters in the same town. The stories are necessarily uplifting or humorous, but they shed a lot of light on the world we live in these days especially in regard to the wars in the middle east. The whole book is not focused on the unrest, but it is a common theme. I did really enjoy the style of the writing and I do think that it is well written to convey some of the more serious aspects of our lives. However, it isn't all morbid as it additionally discusses absurd aspects of our world that allow for lighter sections of the book. I would recommend this book to people who enjoy short stories and don't mind a read that isn't brimming with comedy and warm fuzzy feelings.

Nick Backas says

Outstanding

Nick says

Dacey's varied experiences come through in his debut, consisting of a range of raw short stories.

Marjorie says

I don't often choose the short story format in books but something about this one interested me. What I particularly liked about this book is that the stories are all woven together and include many of the same characters, all neighbors in Wequaquet. In one story, you'll read about a man telling his own story and then in another story, his mother or his old girlfriend will be telling their story, which of course includes him. So you get different perspectives from different people about the same characters.

I'm not going to review each story because that would be like reviewing each chapter of a book since this is really one story about the people in Wequaquet. The stories aren't in consecutive order and do jump around in time. The author writes very realistically and some of the stories are everyday type of happenings, but even those stories have an edge to them. Some of the stories are disturbing and some will touch your heart. There were a couple where I had to sit awhile after reading them, just giving them a bit more thought before moving on to the next one.

I think my favorite story was of the father driving his young son to his first date at a skating rink. There were so many insights into the father's fears and longings for his son and his love for the boy was so touching. There were also a couple of stories that were a bit too crass for me and because of that, they didn't have anything particular to say to me. As a whole, the book kept my interest and I did find some very powerful literary moments in this collection of short stories.

I won this book from the publisher through LibraryThing and have been asked to give an honest review.

Gary says

On the surface, the residents of Wequaquet, Massachusetts, might not seem to much resemble us. The town is overwhelmingly white and blue-collar. But there is one common denominator that binds them together: they all just want someone to love them. But that in the end is what also binds them to us--for isn't that all that any of us seek?

That's the quest that lies at the heart of all the stories in Mr. Dacey's book. Each has his own way of assuming the quest. What does it mean to experience/express love? What happens to love, when it seems to dissipate over time. What, for that matter, is love? Some of the folks of Wequaquet we meet in these pages meet some insight. But often, we find ourselves still questing . . .

Mr. Dacey writes well. Most of his stories follow conventional form, though he experiments in a couple of cases. One of those experiments, however, did not succeed with me. It was a story that consisted of one 8-page punctuation-less stream-of-consciousness run-on sentence. I tolerated a couple of pages, then gave up. It came early enough in the book that I didn't yet trust Mr. Dacey enough as a writer to know whether it was worth investing the effort required to read it. Having finished the book, however, I just might make that investment sometime and go back and read it. Mr. Dacey is just that good of a writer that it might pay off.

Amanda Doyle says

Dacey's debut will leave you wanting more.

His uncanny ability to capture the heart of these characters in such a relatable fashion, allows you to connect with the characters in every story. All of his stories revolve around persons in the midst of either internal or external struggles, such as: a father taking his son on his first date; neighbors both working through their own personal issues, but taking it out on each other in seemingly petty (yet easy to envision) ways.

After pulling you into the lives of these characters, he is able to intertwine the real-life humor we've all experienced. Making each story like a chapter in life.

His stories will pull you in from the first page, and leave you craving his next piece of work.

Shaun Bossio says

One of the best short story collections I've read, especially from a debut author. All of the stories tie together, so the work is more of a novel than a collection of stories. Another way to think about it, maybe a better way, is that it is the story of a community rather than a single individual or family. Definitely an author to watch in the coming years.

Larry H says

I'd rate this 4.5 stars.

Full disclosure: I received an advance copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for an unbiased review. Many thanks to NetGalley and Henry Holt & Company for making it available!

Patrick Dacey's story collection, *We've Already Gone This Far*, is moving, amusing, thought provoking, and truly excellent. The stories are linked in as much that they either take place in the small town of Wequaquet or the characters once lived there or are descended from those who did, and many of the stories mention characters who have been the focus of a different story. This is certainly a look at working-class America, but many of these characters don't have the typical problems you'd expect of the working class.

Life is not always good for the characters in these stories, but even when they're struggling they're experiencing moments of grace, or whatever grace means to them. These are parents, spouses, misfits, soldiers, and those just desperate to find their moment. These stories are about love, sex, self-esteem, despair, devotion, and hope. Dacey is a writer with a tremendous gift.

Only one story of the thirteen in this collection really didn't work for me, but some of them really wowed me. Among my favorites were "Downhill," in which the father of a blind child is struggling to make ends meet and provide his son a world he feels safe and happy in; "Mutatis Mutandis," which told the story of a woman who has let herself go who finds redemption of a sort when she gets plastic surgery provided by a television talk show; "Patriots," in which one woman finds herself outraged and moved by her neighbor; "Acts of Love," about two men whose marriages are in trouble who meet while living in temporary housing; and "Never So Sweet," in which a young boy is forever affected by the death of his uncle and the impact his uncle's girlfriend had on the boy's life.

I've often said that for me, one of the hallmarks of a good story is when I feel myself wishing the story were longer, even novel-length. I honestly could have seen many of the stories in Dacey's collection expanded into novels, and would love to know more about some of these characters. Dacey's use of language is vivid and poetic, and his storytelling is mesmerizing and emotional at times. This is really a collection worth reading, and I look forward to seeing what's next in Dacey's career.

See all of my reviews at <http://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blo....>

Sam Sattler says

Patrick Dacey's *We've Already Gone This Far* is a collection of thirteen stories about the residents of the fictional little town of Wequaquet, Massachusetts. Wequaquet is very much a working class town, and like their counterparts everywhere, its residents are trying to get by as best they can in a shaky economy. They all grew up dreaming the American dream, but now there don't seem to be enough jobs to go around. Life, though, has to go on - and some things never change. Dacey's stories and his characters remind us that we are all in this thing called life together, and that we have more in common, than not.

These are stories about failed marriages, mothers with sons fighting wars on the other side of the world, old men desperate for friendship, men running as fast as they can just to get by, and others hoping to rekindle old relationships. Admittedly, none of these people are particularly happy, but Dacey makes them seem so real that the reader is likely to recognize a part of himself in each of them. In all most every instance, these people are not defined by their problems, but by their hopefulness that things will get better if they just keep plugging away.

One of my favorites is "Friend of Mine," the story of a retired high school football coach unfortunate enough to have two vengeful ex-students rent the house next door to his. The young men are as unhappy with their lives as the old coach is with his, but one of them still remembers how the coach often said, "There's always the day before the day everything changes." And, although it doesn't happen like either of them thought it might, that day and the one after it finally come for both of them.

“Incoming Mail,” a series of letters from a mother to her soldier son, is one of the funniest sad stories imaginable, so funny, in fact, that it is at times difficult to remember that the letters are being written by a woman fast losing her mind – and that there is a boy on the other end of the letters who is probably being driven a little crazy himself by what he reads.

There are few happy endings in *We've Already Gone This Far*. Most often, the stories do end with the characters in better positions than which they began, but their happiness is all a matter of degree, and most of them settle for happier rather than for happy. In “*Mutatis Mutandis*,” for instance, a fat woman who is so desperate to lose weight that she willingly humiliates herself on a reality T.V. show, settles for attracting a new lover. And then there are the men in “*Acts of Love*” and “*Frieda, Years Later*,” one of whom finds a new friend only when he hits rock bottom, and the other who, despite his wandering eye, comes to very much appreciate what he has at home. “*Lost Dog*,” though, is a true tragedy. This one tells the story of three young soldiers who naively wander off into the desert in search of a stray dog that reminds them of home. Fittingly, this is the last story in the collection, because it is certainly the most haunting of them all.

These are stories about one of the most basic of human instincts, the desire to emotionally connect to others. It is what, after all, we are all about, and Patrick Dacey reminds us beautifully in this debut collection of just how much we need each other.

Danny Cerullo says

Fucking great. Read it.
