



The Custard Heart

Dorothy Parker

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'She felt a cozy solidarity with the big company of the voluntary dead.'

Wise-cracking and heartbreak, these tales of women on the edge by the legendary wit Dorothy Parker show the darkness beneath the surface of the Jazz Age.

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The Custard Heart Details

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Author : Dorothy Parker

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From Reader Review The Custard Heart for online ebook

Beatrizmallow says

I liked the middle story Big Blonde that deals with depression, the other two shorter stories I didn't like as much.

Dane Cobain says

This is another of the Penguin Mini Modern Classics that I've been working through. Three cracking short stories that touch on boozing, mistakes and regret. It's piqued my interest and left me wanting more from Dorothy Parker.

Nicola says

The second story Big Blonde, is a remarkable tale of undiagnosed depression.

Hind says

Found another person to read. These stories are superb.

Phoebe says

“...so that she might be spared as long as possible from the bright new cruelty of the day. Only when the littler and kinder hours had succeeded noon could she bring herself to come forth and face the recurrent sorrows of living.”

Sounds like the ultimate easy Sunday plan: stay in bed until well past noon and read books or do nothing! Now, I can quote Dorothy Parker whenever being a human gets too much for my custard heart. That ingenious title though—it brings the image of pudding to your mind eye. ? And, now imagine that pudding is like your sensitive fragile melting sweet little heart. Although, in the context of the story, the title is a clever irony and an exaggeration. But really, don't you just admire Parker's wit?

‘The Custard Heart’ is a small collection which contains three short stories and they are equal parts wisecracking and heartbreaking. Parker's portrayal of ‘women on the edge’ is vivid and disconcerting, and the social commentary on the darkness beneath the surface of hedonistic, decadent and glamorous Jazz age, is acute. Parker's writing does no telling, only the showing, in an implicit way—it makes the reading experience all the more rewarding as you grapple with the clues to grasp what she is not telling you.

The titular tale is about a privileged lady, with the wealth and luxury of upper-class in the Jazz age, who spends all her days creating the perfect impression of 'wistfulness' and deluding herself and everyone around her. It is a charming tale in which Parker's lyrical prose, sly humour and irony shine the brightest. The second story is a tragic and dark tale of a woman's struggle to be 'a good sport' and her downward spiral to the undiagnosed depression. The language is startling and visceral, and it broke my heart. The third one 'You Were Perfectly Fine' is a cynical humorous little tale which derides the sincerity (or the lack thereof) of men's declarations of love.

ChrisDQ says

This small collection contains three short stories. The Custard Heart was interesting (and that title is fantastic), but the second story, Big Blonde, made an intense impression on me, even though it was as short as it was (which in a way, only makes me have more respect for the writer Dorothy Parker; to have collected so much emotion and unspoken feelings in so little pages). A story about the effects depression can have on ones life, definitely when no one around you is willing to accept it.

My first Penguin Modern, and a great start. Also my first Dorothy Parker now I'm thinking about it; I still have The Collected Dorothy Parker waiting for me on my shelves...

Sam Wait says

The Custard Heart was good, and enjoyable, especially because through reading Parker you are reading what she is not saying, therefore grappling onto whatever clues she gives you, e.g. Gwennie's cold. The best thing about this collection in my opinion is the second story, Big Blonde, and the title, when I first saw it, kind of repulsed me? But after reading it I realised that was the whole point. Throughout the entire narrative, Hazel is seen by others as just that, and no one will give her any room to be anything different - even if she is quite obviously suffering from depression. All the men in her life like her when she's amiable and giddy, and shun her when she's anything else. You Were Perfectly Fine, another brilliantly named story, is lesser, but still blatant in expressing Parker's cynical opinions on men's declarations of love, and how heartfelt they actually are.

Peter says

Reading is supposed to bring great pleasure, isn't it? Well this certainly does not do that. Two of the three stories are of girls who just whore it up and the theme of two of them is booze, drunken guys and how the girls love alcoholics. The finale! How many guys can a girl do in an evening.

Unpleasant, turgid and should not have seen print.

This is number 4 of the Penguin Moderns, only 46 to go.

Mango says

“... Mrs. Larnier wore yellow of evenings. She had gowns of velvet like poured country cream and satin with the laquer of buttercups and chiffon that spiraled about her like golden smoke. She wore them, and listen in shy surprise to the resulting comparisons to daffodils, and butterflies in the sunshine”

?? ?

Kirsty says

The Custard Heart is the fourth book in the Penguin Moderns series, which I have decided to read in order after receiving the full boxed collection in all of its glory. The three stories by Dorothy Parker in this collection - 'The Custard Heart', 'Big Blonde', and 'You Were Perfectly Fine' - have all been taken from *The Collected Dorothy Parker*, which was first published as *The Portable Dorothy Parker* in 1944. Whilst I've not read any of Parker's short stories before, I have read the entirety of her poetry output.

The descriptions in each of these stories, which are 'tales of women on the edge' are startling and vivid. From 'The Custard Heart', for instance, '... Mrs Lanier wore yellow of evening. She had gowns of velvet like poured country cream and satin with the lacquer of buttercups and chiffon that spiraled about her like golden smoke. She wore them, and listened in shy surprise to the resulting comparisons to daffodils, and butterflies in the sunshine, and such...'.

Here, Parker paints intimate portraits of three women, in a perceptive and introspective manner. Parker looks at ageing, relationships, emotions, and womanhood at different stages, amongst other things. 'Big Blonde', which shows the slip into depression and its depths, was as tense as it was fantastic. I found each of these tales immediately immersive, and am very much looking forward to reading the rest of her stories in future.

Emma says

this little book contains a collection of three poignant short stories by a writer I'm sure to revisit. It was the title that drew me to picking this one up and now I couldn't be happier to have discovered Dorothy Parker.

Russo says

Three very good stories of women trapped in the folds of the jazz age - the first a deeply ironic skewering of blind wealth and privilege; the third a quick recap rumble through a drunken night where, in piecing it back together, a happy ending that will be nothing of the sort is gradually uncovered. However, it is the longest of

the three, Big Blonde, where the collection hits hardest for me - a story of a woman who attaches herself to a variety of men as a means of living, while alcohol intrudes increasingly upon her life. It would not be so powerful if this were not a life choice/necessity for so many women back in this era (and beyond). All three are tragic in their way, yet written with real life. DP had her finger on the pulse. That is was a female beat she was channelling probably explains her enduring appeal.

Angela says

Witty, wicked and very of it's time, this pocket book and the 3 stories within give a little flavour of Ms Parker's talents

Ghostly Writer says

I was drawn and could relate to the emotions and mindset of the character in the second short story...

Nabilah Firdaus says

A collection of short stories that revolved around undiagnosed depression, alcoholism and marriage beneath the surface of the Jazz Age - even though these stories were a classics, the themes and mood still ring true to today. Loved the second story, "Big Blonde" the most - it's so full with an emotional weight laced with feelings of melancholy towards the human condition. What a breathtaking combo.
