



Nothing Is Strange

Mike Russell

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20 mind-expanding short stories.

Inspiring, liberating, otherworldly, magical, surreal, bizarre, funny, disturbing, unique... all of these words have been used to describe the stories of Mike Russell so put on your top hat, open your third eye and enjoy: Nothing Is Strange

Nothing Is Strange Details

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Author : Mike Russell

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From Reader Review Nothing Is Strange for online ebook

Hanaa says

I was sent a copy of the book in exchange for an honest review. Nothing is Strange is a collection of short stories that explore the strange and unusual. Although it is a bizarro book, it is definitely something beginner readers of the genre will appreciate and enjoy. As someone who has read her fair share of bizarro, I liked this collection, but I did think (as I did with Strange Medicine) that the stories could have been better realized if they were longer. Otherwise, the collection is short and sweet and a fun treat!

Nancy Oakes says

I picked up this absolute gem of a little book yesterday afternoon and sort of just floated through it, in a good way. There are twenty stories in this small book, obviously very short (it's only 144 pages long) but definitely powerful. What I discovered is that while reading, I could actually visualize the author's bizarre characters and settings in my head and it was sort of like walking through a gallery of surrealist paintings. That's the best way I can describe it -- I wasn't blessed with the gift of eloquence in my writing (as I'm so fond of saying, I'm a reader, not a writer), so that image will just have to do.

I will say that this is not a book for everyone, for example, it probably wouldn't appeal to readers who have to have things spelled out, explained, etc., since that doesn't really happen here. This is a book for people who enjoy a good think. Its elegance lies in its simplicity, and its simplicity belies its complexity. It is dark, definitely designed for people who want something different in their reading; it's also one of those books I appreciate for its ability to go outside the box and push my own reading boundaries outside of the norm. It is beyond cool, well beyond ordinary, and just so what I needed right now.

for more, I've posted about it at my online reading journal.

Alison says

An enjoyable fast read. Short quirky stories of the weirdest kind. Highly entertaining.

Katja Vartiainen says

The first book I read on my Kindle. Very pleasant. This book is fascinating. Strange short stories, which I realized at some point reminded me of Indian puranas, those lovely stories of Ganesha and co. Myths, which reveal a bigger truth. I don't know if that was the goal of the author, but it is a hard one - to write contemporary myths. Or maybe one could say these stories were like zen koans a bit, to bring one to a realization. Or if you don't want to dig so deep, call them surrealist to please the western mind, as à la

Borges.

I found they were not strange just for strangeness's sake, and they are often funny. Some times maybe too much was tried to create a metaphor, when the reader's subconsciousness could have finished the job. The efficiency of short phrases and chapters was mostly good although at times I wished the story to go on. I would love to illustrate this kind of literature!

Lauren Stoolfire says

I received a free copy of this paperback book from Strange Books in exchange for an honest review.

Nothing is Strange is the first collection of short stories by Mike Russell. I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to read this weird and wonderful collection after having enjoyed his work in *Strange Medicine*. In this collection, we get to see a wider variety of his style with twenty stories. I liked all of the stories featured here, but my favorites are "The Warehouse", "The Meeting", "Barry and the Triplets", "Extraordinary Elsie", "Mask Man", "Stan and Stan", and "The Living Crown".

These uniquely surreal stories aren't for everyone, but all of them are really well put together. As for all of the stories I mentioned above, I wouldn't say no to hearing a little more from those worlds or having each of them expanded to something a bit longer. If you like Karen Russell's style from *Vampires in the Lemon Grove*, you may want to give strange, in the best way, tales a look.

Thanks again to Strange Books for this wonderful opportunity!

Valia says

I generally bow to the author. The stories came to me in a strange and unusual way. Ideas are so unusual and can be interpreted in many different ways, and what better than going into the world of theories and mysteries?... <https://underthepiles.wordpress.com/2...>
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William Aicher says

Don't believe the title. In this book, **EVERYTHING** is strange. And it's absolutely marvelous. A collection of very short stories by Mike Russell, *Everything Is Strange* comes across as a kind of mix of *Black Mirror* and *The Twilight Zone*, but still something else altogether.

In my experience, writing a weird story isn't all that difficult. Just throw a bunch of things that don't make sense together and create a narrative. But what IS difficult, and what Russell does with aplomb, is to create strange stories where nothing really quite makes sense ... and turn those stories into narratives that hold a much deeper meaning than simply what happens on the page.

These are surrealistic think-pieces. And they'll take you to wholly new places, where the absurd is the

ordinary, and self-discovery is just one oddity away.

I'm not going to synopsize any of these, as they're all so short that to do so would be to spoil them. But what I can say is this: This book is absolutely worth picking up. As each story stands on its own, it's a great collection to pick up for a bit of in-between reading - though I often found myself sitting down and cranking through several stories at a single read.

Contrary to the title, in Russell's world everything is strange. But it's also extremely realistic, when you really dig into the heart of the matters being discussed. A wonderful exploration of our reality through dream and metaphor, I can't recommend this collection enough.

Addendum: I should note that the writing here isn't flamboyant or overly prosaic. But instead the stories are written rather simply, which in my opinion adds to the impact of the stories. The matter-of-fact style keeps things from becoming fantastical, and all the more relatable in their telling.

Johnny says

This book is filled with stories will make your mind race, and think amazing thoughts. I've read it multiple times and made my friends read some of my favorite stories.

I don't want to spoil anything for readers, so I am just going to say:

If you want to read well-written short stories and as a bonus get to see the world in a different light read this book.

Melissa Graham says

Nothing Is Strange is one of the strangest books I have ever read in my life. That is not to say it's badly written, but you truly have to suspend reality to get through most of these short stories. They are not your average plot-driven stories but a series of short, weird, snippets of strange things happening to strange people.

The Pros:

1. The cover image. This, in my opinion, is one of the best, most creative, and eye-catching covers I've seen on a self-published book. This should be given as an example of good cover art.
2. The chapters/stories don't drag on. With a book like this, I think if they were any longer then it would become very difficult to stay interested, but the author has made it easy for even the most distractable reader to stay plugged in.
3. It delivers exactly what is promised: Strangeness. No frilly characters, no twisty complex plots. The author keeps to his quirky, oddball voice.

The Cons:

1. Hard to wrap your head around. While I give kudos for staying true to his vision and his voice, I personally had a hard time not finishing each chapter with complete confusion. Perhaps the author exists on a higher plane of intelligence than myself, as a great deal of truly strange people do, and there are hidden themes and meanings to each story but I couldn't decipher anything while reading. Not a good book choice for people who like cut and dry, tangible themes or plots.
2. Grammar and Punctuation. If you get easily distracted by punctuation and grammar mistakes, you may find yourself unable to go through this book. I am not sure if the errors are truly errors or just how the author meant to write it, but for me it was probably the hardest thing to get over in this work.

Susan Hampson says

This is my second book by this author, the first being Strange Medicine. Both books are very similar in respect of they have short sharp story blasts of pure weird and utterly crazy brilliance. There is nothing like them, none that you could possibly say I have read something similar before, just uniqueness. It is like watching mime but in words, I just couldn't take my eyes from the pages because I felt I would miss something if I did.

Some stories are very sad, or they feel like a never-ending circle that you know will just go on after you leave, because although they are only a few pages long you don't feel like the story will ended it will carry on when the words finish. The cover picture is perfect, the title brilliant and the stories truly fascinating. The thing about these stories is every person that reads them will interpret them differently. I really don't think that there is a right or wrong way to describe them and I even feel that I could read them another day and see a different story in them all again depending on my own mood at the time. It makes them personal to me.

Of course I have my favourite. The Meeting.

Do take a look for a very different entertaining read.

Jason says

Well that was some mighty fine false advertising, it says on the cover that "Nothing is Strange" that is complete hooey! Everything in this book is strange, I really need to start reading the back of books before I start them, just to give myself a bit of warning for what I'm getting myself into.

The stories are wonderful, some of the most bizarre things I've ever read, I've no idea what kind of mad man Mike Russell is, but he has to be pretty crazy to come up with these stories. Each story starts off with a brief introduction, each time I had the narrator's voice from the twilight zone reading it in my head, in fact each of these stories would be perfect as episodes. There is a quirky humour throughout that had me chuckling a fair bit. I can't really explain any of the stories as they are too surreal to shorten down into a review, here are some amazing highlights:

A man cries

There is a right hand

There is a beard

Invisible bees
Balls of fire
And scones... yes you heard me, scones!

Everybody give this book a go, you won't regret it.

Emm² says

Nothing is Strange is an illicit, dairy-based love affair between synthetic dreams and the sensors and nerves of your eyes. It is nutritious but decadent written chocolate.

Unfortunately, it isn't possible to concentrate paper and idea into a human, for this would be the most intriguing one to chat with. But being your typical homunculus, it would probably be flawed somewhere vital and mope about mourning its own existence for always, and wouldn't want to chat at all.

Nothing is perfect as a short story collection could be. It molds the shapes which only exist in the act of sleep and solidifies them into a theatre of little masterpieces. *Nothing* is hypnotic, humorous, horrifying, and every other H word that we spit out in haste when we can't really describe what we feel. It's truly neapolitan, and not only because one of its stories harbors a serious ice cream fetish.

I stubbornly straddled the fence on this book for awhile even though it kept popping up, and the guilt for that is real. If you're not sure, just try a small bite. It pretty much becomes a vortex after that, and good luck running free from it.

My particular favourites were "Dunce", "Escape From the Butcher's Shop", "The Living Crown", "Extraordinary Elsie" and "Stan and Stan". Interestingly, these all stand out because they challenge the innate fatalism of people. One is not always meant to be what it seems they will at birth, even if everyone they meet says otherwise. Not when there is a whole world waiting out there whose mere touch can change anything.

--More novelties and reviews on my blog. Go crazy.--

Catherine says

Thank you to the author for providing me a free copy in exchange for an honest review :)

I enjoyed this! It was a really quick, quirky read; I was so immersed in it that I actually didn't realize there were 20 stories until looking back on the synopsis after I read it. It seems crazy to think about there being that many now because the whole thing just flew by.

Of the 20, my favourites were The Miracle, Barry & the Triplets, Lesley Visits the Barbers, and The Living Crown. If I had to choose my top one, I would say The Living Crown-it touched upon free will which really grabbed my attention.

Reading this kind of takes you to a whole other world, one which was created by the author but also by your own mind filling the gaps that he leaves open for you, which is so fun. Some of the stories I wish were a little

bit longer, but other than that it was very well done and I would recommend it to anyone looking for a good introduction to this genre!

Gerard Bianco says

Reader Beware: If you enjoy reading stories that are written with structure, stories that are comprised of a beginning, middle, and end, or stories that do not transcend the boundaries of reality, then this book is not for you. If, on the other hand, you want to read stories that will free you from the chains that are attached to the anchor of reality, then this is your must-read collection.

Nothing is Strange is a collection of twenty short stories in which everything is strange, but strange in a good way.

The twenty stories are miniature narratives. The collection is well written and highly imaginative. Each story takes you on a journey where the imaginary becomes reality. Instead of reason we have imagination. In place of the banal we have passion for liberation. Instead of the ordinary, we have magic.

By their very nature, the stories are freeing. They will take you to places within your mind you never knew existed. For those unaccustomed to reading surreal stories these stories may be hard to swallow. One might compare it to looking at modern art for the first time. I can only imagine how people felt the first time Duchamp exhibited his Readymades, or Picasso his art. A typical first reaction might raise the question of whether or not the artist is authentic, or is he simply trying to put one over on us.

The concept of these stories first appears to be too simple to be called art. Yet, as one delves into the collection, and crosses back and forth between the boundaries of real and unreal, one comes away with the feeling that there is more to them than at first appears - and you would be correct in this assumption.

Reading these stories feels as if you're following footprints in the snow, footprints that take you somewhere and nowhere. Sometimes the footprints are deep and easy to follow, but sometimes they are obliterated and nearly imperceptible. The reader may, for a time, get lost. For some, tripping through these stories may be a harrowing experience. But for others, the journey on the wind of imagination will be a mind-blowing and rewarding experience.

But the magic doesn't end there, for once discovered and devoured, the effects of a surreal adventure multiplies the further out one travels.

My advice then, dear reader, is for you to read this collection. Take a chance you may be hooked on the reality of non reality, which, in turn, will inspire you to explore other artists of the genre, some who are long gone, and others, like Mike Russell, who are our modern guides on the surreal journey.

So go ahead: Jump into the swimming pool with your clothes on. You may very well find you won't want to get out of the water.

I received a free copy of this book for an honest, non-reciprocal review.

Rebecca Gransden says

What a great selection of shorts. Russell works away in the background like a mystical trickster, the stories full of surreal imagery but somehow twisting them into the more plausible reading of reality.

Reading this collection reminded me of those first rushes of intellectual expansion that you own as an individual, and you spend too much time conjecturing on the nature of reality and everything is mind-blowing. What if instead of this everything was this? But then this was really this! Whoah! These stories really are that much fun.

Russell is a cajoling storyteller. There is a warm and classic feel to the tone of these unexpected tales which lulls the reader into a compliant acceptance. It's just as well Russell appears to have good intentions as these powers could wreak havoc in nefarious hands. Instead he presents stories that have a keen mystical bent and carry the reader sage like through a pick 'n' mix of straightforward faux innocent delights. Yes, delights. Unless I'm missing something cynicism has left the building and what remains isn't twee or naive but unrooted, wise and generous. Perhaps some sort of surrealist parable is closest.

‘The End of Sex,’ is too funny.

It is possible that Russell is playing the fool like the classical fool, and that his stories with their deadpan tone and spiritual aspects should be taken as a simple way into personal truth. Or they are wonderfully evocative mind bending tales that draw forth rich imagery laden with heavy symbolism. Or they are a series of engrossing and entertaining pieces full of a refreshingly giving humour and lively mind's eye world. Whatever, this was extremely enjoyable to read and I look forward to more from this author.
