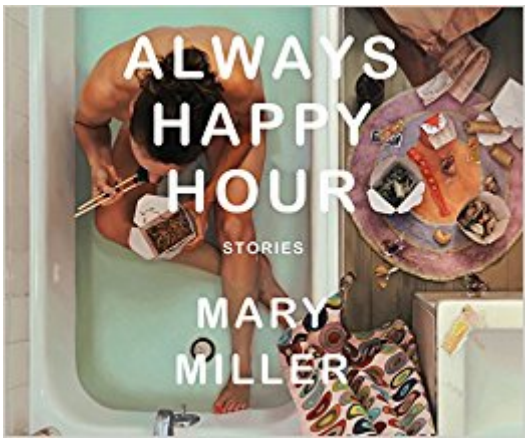
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Always Happy Hour: Stories



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Synopsis

Always Happy Hour weaves tales of young women who are deeply flawed, intensely real, and who struggle to get out of their own way. These women love to drink and have sex; they make bad decisions with men who love them too much or too little; they haunt gas stations, public pools, and dive bars, seeking understanding in the most unlikely of places; and, although each shoulders the weight of different baggage, they all suspect they deserve better. In this collection of acerbic and ruefully funny stories, Miller takes a microscope to love and intimacy, evoking the reticence of love among the misunderstood, the grit and comfort of bad habits that can’t be broken, and the beat-by-beat minutiae of ill-fated relationships.

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Dreamscape Media; Unabridged edition (March 7, 2017)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 1520072996
ISBN-13: 978-1520072999

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.1 x 5 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 stars 15 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #888,657 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #78 inÃ Â Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > Short Stories #2338 inÃ Â Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > General #10828 inÃ Â Books > Literature & Fiction > Short Stories & Anthologies > Short Stories

Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“In MillerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s new collection, a tipsy glow surrounds her Southern women as they trawl for cocktails, honk-tonk music, and men while nursing an inner ache they canÃ¢â ¬â„¢t booze away. In lucid, vivid prose, Miller renders them alive to lust and, however improbably, to love.Ã¢â ¬Â• - O, The Oprah MagazineÃ¢â ¬Å“Taken as a whole, this harrowing yet ultimately enjoyable collection is less about the conventions of storytellingÃ¢â ¬â ¢exposition, climax, denouementÃ¢â ¬â ¢and more of a meditation on the stories a person tells herself.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Hilary Moss, New York Times Book ReviewÃ¢â ¬Å“Somewhere between the old trope of the fallen woman and the unctuousness of the likable heroine, the young narrators of MillerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s searching stories inhabit the middle space known as reality. . . . Anyone whoÃ¢â ¬â„¢s faltered on the way to success and contentment might find solace in the do-gooder in Ã¢â ¬Å“Big Bad

Love,Ã¢â ¬Â• or the boozy, boyfriend-enabled composition teacher in the title story.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Boris Kachka, VultureÃ¢â ¬Å“In this stunning (and well-titled) collection of short fiction involving complicated, unprivileged women on the precipice of adulthood, Mississippi author Miller brilliantly explores lives that feel simultaneously destined and precarious.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Elizabeth Taylor, The National Book ReviewÃ¢â ¬Å“Some of the women in this collection of short stories are spiraling; some are simply stuck. But they all have one thing in common: relationships in varying degrees of WTF? We can relate.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Cosmopolitan magazineÃ¢â ¬Å“StellarÃ¢â ¬Â¦MillerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s collection feels so true because it never glosses over the desperate or unflattering portrayals of its narrators, but neither does it exploit their faults. These stories acutely explore boyfriends, exes, poor choices, and the sad fallout of so many doomed relationships.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Publishers Weekly (starred and boxed review)Ã¢â ¬Å“Readers will find themselves rivetedÃ¢â ¬Â¦The 16 stories in this collectionÃ¢â ¬Â¦feel both homey and exotic, limning lives at once familiar and distinctly their own. Like a two-for-one drink special or a boxful of beer, this bracingly strong collection may prove intoxicating.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Kirkus Reviews (starred review)Ã¢â ¬Å“The stories in Mary MillerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Always Happy Hour are full of wit, bite, and the boundless intelligence of their author. This book is further evidence for what I felt after reading her brilliant debut novel, The Last Days of California, that Mary Miller is an astonishingly gifted writer. Her next one canÃ¢â ¬â„¢t come soon enough.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Kevin Powers, author of The Yellow BirdsÃ¢â ¬Å“The stories have a Southern flavor that deliver on the publisher's promise of a book with savage Southern charm and hard-edged proseÃ¢â ¬Â¦The best literature illuminates the human condition and provokes contemplation. Miller puts readers inside the experiences of these women, has us stand in their socks, make their mistakes, and survive.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Martha Sheridan, Dallas Morning NewsÃ¢â ¬Å“Reading Always Happy Hour is like drinking an Old Fashioned. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s strong with a sweet burn, and after each taste you immediately want more. Reminiscent of Pam HoustonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Cowboys Are My Weakness, Mary Miller writes well about sex, drugs and white bikinis.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Helen Ellis, author of American HousewifeÃ¢â ¬Å“I fell into this book like it was a night of drinking. I sipped, I laughed, I had some more, I got lonely, I danced a little, I downed the rest, I wanted to cry, I stayed up late closing it out and IÃ¢â ¬â„¢m a wreck and I regret nothing.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Daniel Handler, author of We Are Pirates and Why We Broke UpÃ¢â ¬Å“Stories of self-defeat and loneliness, of bad decisions or maybe worse, the inability to make decisions. Stories of treading waterÃ¢â ¬â ¢where you know you should move towards shore but instead you let yourself drift farther out. Big World introduced us to the power of Mary MillerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s short stories, and Always Happy Hour solidifies her as a major voice in Southern Literature.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Willy Vlautin, author of The FreeÃ¢â ¬Å“Each of these

stories has its own pulse. For anyone whoÃ¢â ¬â„¢s ever looked for love in all the wrong places, this shoebox full of beating hearts is for you.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Amelia Gray, author of Isadora and GutshotÃ¢â ¬Å“Mesmerizing and exactly rendered, and Miller reminds us that for many people, life is defined by hardship, surprise, and just getting byÃ¢â ¬Â¦Excellent reading for fans of the genre.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Barbara Hoffert, Library Journal --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Mary Miller is the author of The Last Days of California and the short-story collection Big World. She is a former James A. Michener Fellow in Fiction and a former John and Renee Grisham Writer-in-Residence at the University of Mississippi. She lives in Gulfport, Mississippi.Madeleine Lambert received her MFA in acting from Brown University/Trinity Rep. Her performances at Trinity Repertory Company include Shelby in Steel Magnolias and Belle in A Christmas Carol. Madeleine graduated with honors from Duke University with majors in theater studies and English and a minor in French. She also attended the School at Steppenwolf. Madeleine played Anne Boleyn in the U.S. premiere of Anne Boleyn at the Gamm Theatre. At Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater, Madeleine played Maggie in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Madeleine received an AudioFile Earphones Award for Murder Below Montparnasse.

A fun journey through other women’s experiences in dating and life. Filled with lots of honesty, though not always flattering for the characters involved. I found the stories contained relateable and also unlived experiences from my single days.

Thought provoking, sweet, sad, poignant. Beautifully written.

Not a well written book. Scattered and disconnected . This read was difficult to follow even in a short story format .

First, the short stories are well written and being from SE Texas I appreicate and can relate to them.But, they are all basically the same story of women, which for whatever reason, keeping make the same mistake, and then wonder why nothing changes.I suggest taking the stories in one at a time, with breaks between each to let your memory fade between each.

I couldn’t even get through it and I needed to for book club.

Always Happy Hour is going to be a tough sell because 1) short stories generally are and 2) my descriptions of the book arenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t the kind that generally make hoards of readers run to the bookstoreÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â|but, this collection is very, very good if you like dark stories (read between the lines: it isnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t for everyone). Elements of this collection reminded me of two beloved TV shows: Seinfeld because the stories arenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t really about anything, yet theyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re about everything (sort of snapshots of life rather than plot-heavy)ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â|and The Office because of the deadpan tone."This is not my life, or it is not the life IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢m supposed to be living, and so I can pretend that it is. I donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t consider the actuality of my situation, which is that every day I live this life it becomes more and more mine, the real one, and the one IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢m supposed to be living falls further away; eventually it will be gone forever."Most of the women in these stories have a defeatist quality about them; life has sort of left them behind. There is a sense of inertia hanging over everything and they canÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t seem to take control of their lives. I wanted to shake them many timesÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â|but, weÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve all had defeatist moments in our own lives and those moments are the readerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s lifeline to relating to certain aspects of these charactersÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ lives, if not the overall wholes. There is a sameness to many of the stories and so they ran together in my head a bit, but reading a story a day or so helped, and my two favorites (Little Bear and First Class) came towards the end of the collection. Pick this collection up if youÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re a fan of dark, dry humor and gorgeous writing.Check out my blog, Sarah’s Book Shelves, for more reviews.

The first entry in Mary MillerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s short story collection, ALWAYS HAPPY HOUR, is titled ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Instructions,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• and in many ways instructs and guides readers to the types of stories that follow. In it, a woman is left to housesit for her boyfriend and take care of his cats. She is lonely without him yet seems distant from her feelings for him, lost as she wanders his apartment but with no place else sheÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢d rather be. SheÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s afraid of losing him and fears that the cat, impossibly, swallowed a razor blade. She reassures him, and herself, that they are happy, that ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“there are no great storms here.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•This is one of the more delicate stories in ALMOST HAPPY HOUR, but the protagonist shares much in common with the other women who populate the book. They are lonely, dissatisfied, bold yet insecure, and MillerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s treatment of them is fascinating. She writes with a clipped yet fluid style and an unflinching honesty.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“UphillÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• is a characteristic tale, describing the tense

relationship of a shady and desperate couple who decide to assist, by taking a picture of a lady theyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve never met, in her execution. The womanÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s willingness to participate is complicated, and her reasons are never fully articulated by Miller, though we do know that her relationship with her mother is less than comforting. When the man returns from taking the picture, and even as she takes him into bed, she is imagining the end of their relationship and the physical distance she will put between them. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“This is not my life,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• she tells herself.In ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Dirty,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• the narrator worries that the videos she makes with her boyfriend will end up on the internet. She doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t work, spending her time waiting for him to come home when they will hang out with their only other friend. Ironically, she doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t want to attach herself to the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“sad, impermanent lives of others.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Like so many figures in these stories, she is needy and passive, but Miller does show a certain amount of compassion for her characters: these women are not unkind or stupid, just stuck. They are, in fact, capable of great insight and great love. Alice, the narrator of two tales, is doing her best to navigate a relationship with her boyfriend and his four-year-old son for whom she has a genuine but complicated affection.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Big Bad LoveÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• is perhaps the most striking story here. It tells of a woman and her growing affection for the troubled girl she works with at a childrenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s shelter. Diamond has suffered great unnamed but implied abuse and is considered too difficult for regular home placement. Even when she does get taken from the shelter to a more domestic setting, she is returned in less than a week, to the chagrin and quiet happiness of her primary caregiver. It is such a heartwrenching, sorrowful and sweet story, showcasing MillerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s talent for capturing the ordinary and complex inner lives of her deceptively simple characters.ALWAYS HAPPY HOUR is dark, but not morose and rarely bitter. The mostly unnamed, even at time interchangable, women in these stories, are, like so many people truly are, their own worst enemies. They are sympathetic in their longing for companionship and acceptance, contentment, passion, and real and lasting love. MillerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s writing is confident and presents readers with narratives that are frightening and sexy, interesting and entertaining.Reviewed by Sarah Rachel Egelman

I liked this collection of short stories for telling it like it really is for a lot of young women. I was a young woman once and I recall making bad decisions in my search for true love. For many of the protagonists in these stories, there are also other considerations, such as a bad childhood, lack of education and money, loneliness and lack of support. In the end, I liked them all, even if I did not agree with some of their actions. I give one less star because I would have liked a story or two

where the women were more positively proactive in their own lives. It would have been more realistic since everything is designed to keep women down, and yet we keep rising.

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