



Departures: Seven Stories from Heathrow

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Seven short stories from bestselling author Tony Parsons, based on his week as Writer in Residence at Heathrow airport.

Here is Heathrow as it has never been seen before – a secret city populated by the 75 million travellers who pass through every year, a place where journeys and dreams end – and begin.

From the brilliant twenty-something kids who control the skies up in Air Traffic Control to the softly-spoken man who cares for the dogs, lions and smuggled rattlesnakes at Heathrow's Animal Reception Centre, from the immigration officers who have heard it all before to the firemen who hone their skills by setting the green plane on fire, from the armed police who watch for terrorist attacks to the pilots who have touched the face of god – Heathrow teems with life.

In Departures, his first collection of short stories, Tony Parsons takes us deep inside the secret city.

Departures: Seven Stories from Heathrow Details

Date : Published October 27th 2011 by HarperCollins

ISBN : 9780007458653

Author : Tony Parsons

Format : Paperback 99 pages

Genre : Fiction, Short Stories, Travel, Contemporary

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From Reader Review Departures: Seven Stories from Heathrow for online ebook

Marina says

Visiting the book fair last month, I've found this small book. I like Tony Parsons a lot, and I was wondering how I didn't know about this book. I've found out that he spent seven days at Heathrow as official airport writer just to write these seven heart-warming stories of life.

Departures is a book made of seven stories. I've never been at Heathrow before, but these stories made me feel like I've always been there.

There is a boy who likes to watch the airplanes leaving and coming.

There is green airplane used for practice in case of fire.

There is a woman who works at customs, a man who takes care for the animals traveling across the world, a guy who takes care for the birds in front of the plane.

There is a whole city inside the airport. People coming and leaving, people saying goodbye, people welcoming their friends and families. Brides coming to marry Prince Harry, smugglers of drugs and jewelry. The stuff that works here has seen everything.

I don't know how to write a review for a collection of stories, and not a novel. But I hope that you will enjoy this book as much as I did. It's short and it won't take much of your time. I recommend it for everyone. If you don't trust me, trust Tony Parsons. I always enjoy reading his heart-warming books.

Samantha says

Enjoyed some stories more than others, but wasn't a huge fan of the format.

Dipping in and out of characters only really works for me if it's consistent, but this book confused things slightly as to whether the stories were all crossed over or separate. Obviously the final story combined storylines, but this wasn't even touched upon in most chapters so I didn't ever really settle in to the narratives.

Not for me, but nothing terrible to say.

India says

Pretty junky tbh

Goge says

This is a small book with big messages. I am a fan of Parsons' laid-back attitude towards life. He makes no dreamy promises, life can be hard and cruel, but it's also filled with beautiful human stories, the one that will make you smile, or make you think-hey, this is me. Those stories seem simple and short, but they describe life as it is, for better or worse. Definitely, worth giving hour or so of your life to read them all at ones.

Pete Young says

In August 2011 Tony Parsons became writer-in-residence at Heathrow's Terminal 5, and these seven interlinked short stories are the result of that fruitful week. Having been connected with Heathrow for most of my professional life I thought this collection might be a bit of an unrewarding 'busman's holiday', but it's the details of the working lives of other Heathrow mavens that really caught my eye, and for readers unconnected with Heathrow other than when just passing through these stories will probably be even more eye-opening: the mysterious green plane near the perimeter, the bird-scarers, the relentless attempts of small-time criminals to evade border control, the stressful lives of travelling animals, the remote coolness of the air traffic controllers, the pull of the sky and the amazement that can come from thinking too much about modern aviation. I had a problem with the feasibility of the first story in this small collection but in truth that's a minor cavil; Parsons's characterisation is good (particularly the seen-it-all humanity of his Border Agency immigration officer Jaswinder Smith) and this successful collection is going on my shelf for keeps. Nice one, Tony.

Sara Jovanovic says

3.5

Alice says

I hate you, Tony Parsons, and your facile, predictable, saccharine stories. If I were to submit one of these stilted tales with their massive infodumps to the *People's Friend*, it would be rejected with a one-line form letter. Yet other people apparently like this stuff. A much bigger mystery than what goes on behind the scenes at Heathrow's Animal Control unit, in my opinion.

Anel Musanovi? says

Iako možda izgleda kao kratka knjiga, kao knjiga koja vam ne može puno re?i - varate se. Pisac na jako jednostavn na?in prikazuje ono što vidimo svaki dan, ono pored ?ega hodimo svaki dan. Ljude i njihove živote, tužne i sretne pri?e. Ono najljepše. Topla preporuka za ovu jako neobi?nu knjigu.

Danielle says

British writer Tony Parsons spent a week inside of London's Heathrow Airport as a writer in residence, during which time he wrote this short collection containing seven stories about various professionals working there, from animal caretakers and customs agents, to pilots and runway maintenance workers. There are also two stories that mainly focus on travelers, those being the first story "The Green Plane" and the story "The Final Call."

My first impression of this collection was lukewarm. The characters felt flat, the stories were predictable and the writing was only so-so. This includes the first two stories "The Green Plane" and "Fur, Actually."

The narration was better with "The Pilot's Room," though in the end left me disappointed since I felt that I wasn't given the chance to connect with the characters in the way that I should have in order to experience the end in a meaningful way, and the story didn't make a lot of sense. (view spoiler)

The stories made a solid improvement after "The Pilot's Room," with "Say Hello, Wave Goodbye" which showed the thought processes of one of the customs agents when she was evaluating travelers and the results of her suspicions, "No Tower For Old Men" which told the story of a young Air Traffic Controller and his perspectives on his job, resulting social status and the functions of the airport, "The Young Man and the Sky" which told the story of a new recruit to the airfield maintenance team (my one pet peeve is that unlike the other stories, none of the characters in this story are given names, and it becomes distracting) and the first lessons that he learns, and "Final Call" which shows a family of four preparing to return to live back in Australia after being Londoners for ten years and wraps up some of the earlier stories (possibly my favourite).

There were a couple of segments that I enjoyed:

1) *At night the airport glittered like a box of jewels poured out by some careless god.*

2) *And he thought that while you could never become English, and while it was not easy to even become British in a mere ten years, you could certainly become a Londoner. For him the process had begun here - at London's airport.*

Damon had traveled the world for business and knew that airports were often just the punctuation marks of a lifetime, the twilight spaces between places and people, the no-man's land between what had happened and what was yet to be.

#2 continues to go on that for Damon, "He had learned that at Heathrow," which considering the preceding paragraph that says, "For him the process had begun here - at London's airport," seems redundant and a little too ad-copy for me, so I mentally struck it out and managed to enjoy the segment as I have it above.

If you enjoy travel and marvel at airplanes, airports and the possibilities for human connections and separations that they create, this would be a good collection for you to pick up. While there are some sad moments in the collection, for the most part it is a positive reflection on the inhabitants and goings-on in Heathrow.

This is a "2.5 - 3 star" book, which I would recommend for airport aficionados, London enthusiasts, people looking for small short story collections (such as those trying to complete their yearly book challenge!) and possibly teenaged readers since for the most part the stories are pretty tame (one drug overdose aside).

And no, the sombrero on the cover is never explained.

Gabriella Cseh says

Great! Imádtam minden elbeszélés, pedig már rég elszoktam a novellák olvasásától, mert nem tudtam az elmúlt pár évben lekötni.

Megható, bájos, emelkedett történetek, amik megmutatják, milyen remek emberek dolgoznak Nagy-Britannia legnagyobb repterén.

Nyilván vannak irodalmilag sokkal értékesebb művek is. De nem kell minden regénynek-novellának olyan emelkedettnek vagy éppen mélynek lennie, hogy az ember elfáradjon az olvasásában.

Szívből tudom ajánlani Mindenkinek.

Michele Brooker says

This has made me want to read more Tony Parsons!

Jelena Antic says

noooo

Alice-Elizabeth (marriedtobooks) says

Borrowed from my library's e-book service!

I really liked the concept for these collection of short stories, written by Tony during his week long residency at one of the world's busiest airports Heathrow. These are mainly for an adult audience, but there were an array of characters (and animals!) featured throughout. They were quick, easy to read, some of the stories I enjoyed more than others. I'm unsure if I would re-read this collection again since there were moments of info-dumping which I didn't like so much.

Victoria Louise says

meh

Emma says

I've always had a soft spot for short stories. I enjoyed all the stories in this book but especially the one about the old man who hangs around the airport. The stories offer a look into the behind the scenes activities in an airport which was interesting.
