



The Stopped Heart

Julie Myerson

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Internationally bestselling author Julie Myerson's beautifully written, yet deeply chilling, novel of psychological suspense explores the tragedies—past and present—haunting a picturesque country cottage.

Mary Coles and her husband, Graham, have just moved to a cottage on the edge of a small village. The house hasn't been lived in for years, but they are drawn to its original features and surprisingly large garden, which stretches down into a beautiful apple orchard. It's idyllic, remote, picturesque: exactly what they need to put the horror of the past behind them.

One hundred and fifty years earlier, a huge oak tree was felled in front of the cottage during a raging storm. Beneath it lies a young man with a shock of red hair, presumed dead—surely no one could survive such an accident. But the red-haired man is alive, and after a brief convalescence is taken in by the family living in the cottage and put to work in the fields. The children all love him, but the eldest daughter, Eliza, has her reservations. There's something about the red-haired man that sits ill with her. A presence. An evil.

Back in the present, weeks after moving to the cottage and still drowning beneath the weight of insurmountable grief, Mary Coles starts to sense there's something in the house. Children's whispers, footsteps from above, half-caught glimpses of figures in the garden. A young man with a shock of red hair wandering through the orchard.

Has Mary's grief turned to madness? Or have the events that took place so long ago finally come back to haunt her...?

The Stopped Heart Details

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Author : Julie Myerson

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Jennifer says

I loved this book. I was entranced by both the story, and the writing. I quickly devoured the 500 pages ... and then suddenly it was over, and I was confused. Did I miss a few pages? How did the two stories combine? How did it actually end? I feel like I read it, but I'm still waiting to find out how it comes together.

Laure says

It had such promise! A page turner! Certainly easy to read. while it did keep me reading I just kept waiting for so much more!! I couldn't believe that there wasn't a real connection between past and present. I had so hoped and was looking forward to the discovery of the past by the present owners of the cottage. Disappointed!

Ann-Michael says

Can someone PLEASE explain to me the correlation between the two time periods, other than the occasional cameo of James' ghost? Paula Hawkins, author of "The Girl on the Train," has said this book is "bloody brilliant." I found this book neither spooky nor gory, although I do find Eddie to be a serious creep. (Also, his character's plot twist was just bizarre.)

I wanted to like this book, I really did. But you can't always get what you want.

Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says

This book was honestly one of the most powerful I have ever read. In terms of stirring emotion, incredible writing and characters that just took my breath away, I cannot, cannot rave about this book enough. When I put this book down I was in a whirlwind of thoughts and feelings and it was somewhat like being shell-shocked. I have never read anything from Julie Myerson before but by golly I will not hesitate to now. **What an absolutely spectacular book.**

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During a ferocious storm, a red-haired stranger appears in the garden of a small farming cottage. Eliza and her parents take him in. But very soon, it's clear he has no intention of leaving.

A century later, Mary and Graham have experienced every parent's worst nightmare. Now, escaping the memories and the headlines, they have found an idyllic new home in rural Suffolk. A cottage, a beautiful garden. The perfect place to forget. To move on. But life doesn't always work that way.

There is an undercurrent all through this book of *edge of your seat tension*, like with every moment you are

waiting for something to happen, it's palpable. The incredible thing is that once things **DID** happen and I was witness to them I was still stunned, shocked and speechless.

This book takes a stranger who enters a family home and turns it into something so much more complex than I could ever have forecast. Let me just rave about the characters for a while. Indulge me. There are characters in this book that I despised with every single bone in my body and those that I embraced and wanted to protect and care for. The depth of each character, their presence in the book, their humanness, just everything was freaking brilliant.

The book took me to some **dark places in the human psyche** and shocked me with choices made by human beings towards other human beings. Truly, I now believe that some people are just born in darkness and it follows them wherever they go. The Stopped Heart is an exceptional work of fiction that had me feel every single emotion on the spectrum, I could NOT put this book down. Life stopped from the moment I started to read it. I can't do it justice with this review.

There are some incredible scenes in this book and some that just truly shocked me to the core. One particular scene actual made my stomach turnover and I am never, ever affected in that way with fiction. I mean I read horror, graphic crime and a lot of dark fiction but sometimes the scariest thing on the planet is what a person is capable of. It's as simple as that. This is not a comfortable book to read but I hope you will read it and love it as I did.

If you like a book with some depth, characters that you can touch and feel and are not afraid to tread where you have maybe never trod before then do not miss this book. Absolutely one of my favourite reads of 2016 so far and an entry into my long-list for my Top Ten Reads of 2016.

The final outcome of this book quite literally devastated my heart in a million pieces. Never mind the anger and sense of injustice I felt. Holy moly - I won't ever forget this book and I rarely read a book more than once but know I just have to with this one. Julie Myerson, I salute you.

Thanks to the publisher via NetGalley for an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.

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Ellen Gail says

2.5 stars. DNF at roundabouts 20%.

First let me say this: **this is not a bad book.** Its very much a case of "It's not you, it's me." I think that many people will really enjoy this! I hope so! But for me it was not working for several reasons.

1) I had very high expectations. Almost every review is practically glowing with praise! So, when I couldn't find any magic, any creepiness, any *anything* I was disappointed.

2) None of the characters in either perspective / time captured my interest. When I think of every book that I have truly enjoyed, there always has to be at least one character that I can connect with. Even the worlds best plot and storytelling can't win me over if the characters aren't there. When I think about NOS4A2, one of my favorite books I've read this year so far, I think about what a fantastic original plot it had! But none of it would be the same without Vic McQueen, who I love more than is probably healthy. Characters trump plot for me, always.

3) Boredom. Holy shit, the boredom. Every time I put my Kindle away, I had zero motivation to pick it up again. Every time I was reading it, I wanted not to be. If not for Goodreads, there's a chance I would have forgotten I was even reading it. I couldn't get into it even a teensy bit.

I know *The Stopped Heart* is a book that *many* people are going to love, but I don't think it's for me. It's not captivating or exciting me, and I think I'm better off moving on to a new read than forcing myself through. I may give it a shot again someday off in the future, but today is not that day.

Thanks to Edelweiss & Harper Perennial for the digital review copy!

Lisa Hall says

God, this was SO GOOD. It is going in my list of top books to look out for in 2016, that's for sure, and I actually feel so privileged to have read an advance copy of it.

Set over two time scales - the present day and an unspecified date in the past - the stories of two families living in the same house decades apart is so intricately woven together, its just beautiful. There are some strong characters, none of whom seem particularly happy, and the events that occur are in turn shocking and emotional. It's not so much of a 'twisty' plot line as secretive and intriguing - Myers has done an excellent job of hooking the reader's attention and sloooooowly drawing out events and information so that the reader is completely unable to put the book down until they know all the secrets and lies have been exposed.

One that I will definitely be recommending to EVERYONE I know, *The Stopped Heart* is an addictive, compelling read, sure to hook any reader.

Claire Fuller says

I loved this, raced through it, and would happily read it again. There were two narratives which overlap in a ghostly way, and I never wished to be reading the other, which means they were both as interesting as each other. In fact there are three, because there is the history of the couple who come to live in a house and what happened to them. These sections are very disturbing echoes of what is happening in the present and the past, and give just enough away about what happened.

It was atmospheric and creepy - perhaps 3-stars spooky (I've yet to find a book I've read as an adult 4 or 5 stars-spooky, but I'm still looking).

There was only one slightly false note - the explanation about the male neighbour felt slightly rushed and therefore less credible. But this is very minor thing in a great book.

Amanda says

It was a book I couldn't stop reading and then it just ended. That's it. It was done. Nothing was explained, no loose ends were tied up. It turned out to be a giant waste of time with no real point to the story. The writing is great. The story lines and build up to what I thought were going to be this huge reveal were terrific until it just stopped. Now that I'm thinking about it, I'm lowering this to two stars. That's how annoyed I am. Also, it seemed to have a little too much gratuitous violence at the end...especially in the descriptions of murdered children. If I'm going to spend hours bonding with characters and you're going to violently kill them and describe it, there had better damn well be a point to it. But there wasn't. So read it if you like, just be prepared for questions that go unanswered. The main one being...wtf was the point of this?!

Christine says

I turned the last page of this book on Sunday. I put it on a side table and mulled it over for a little while, thinking about it every time I caught a glimpse of it lying on the table. How was I going to try and write a review when I couldn't even decide whether I liked the book or not?

Fair warning here, the words “time line” are going to be WAY overused in this review.

Mary and Graham Coles are desperately trying to carry on with their lives after the devastating crime that took their two daughters. As many people do, they decided that a change of location might help with the healing process. Graham finds a cottage on the outskirts of a small village and instantly falls in love with it and the large garden leading to an orchard. It even has a quaint “apple shed” at the far end of the property. Mary is not so sure and one very early morning before they moved she got out of bed, got in the car and drove to look at the cottage one more time. Before she even got to the door she heard someone whisper her name. Determined to start their new life she agreed to move anyway. Soon after they befriend another childless couple and things begin to look like they may work out after all. But – looks can be deceiving.

This story is told in multiple time lines, the present (Mary and Graham), the not too distant past (their tragedy) and 150 years into the past (the, also tragic, history of the original family in the cottage). Multiple time lines is never a deal breaker for me when reading a book, in fact truth be told, I enjoy that particular writing tool. In “The Stopped Heart” it became rather confusing. The time line would switch suddenly from one paragraph to the next in the same chapter. It was always a sudden jolt that I never quite got used to.

I really enjoyed the story being told within each time line. All through the book there were hints and glimmers – even bright flashes at times – that the stories were interconnected, but when I finally got to the end of the book I felt that only one of those “bright flashes” had come to fruition. The story kept twisting and spinning; the threads tantalizing my imagination, yet those threads did not ever connect. I expected so much more to come together at the end, particularly one specific story thread. Again, hints and teasing, then it

never happened and I was quite disappointed.

Yet, there was a definite “spine chilling” aspect to each time line that I loved. Some ghosts, a mysterious stranger, an abduction, some murders and a deliciously creepy stalker character … those were the elements that kept me reading. *And, is it a ghost if it is a glimpse of a presence from the future?*

All wonderfully written.

And then … and then …

I got to the end and rather than having an “AHA!” moment I was left with a “WTF” that came at me out of the blue and somehow didn’t even make sense?

Conflicted about this one? I’d say!

I’m going to give it 3-stars and call it done. After all that I still would not hesitate to recommend this book to fans of twisted stories with a supernatural element. In fact I’d love to hear the opinion of others about this one.

Marjorie says

This is a hauntingly beautiful story and so well written. Mary and Graham Coles have bought a cottage in the Suffolk countryside. Though it isn’t explained until well into the book, you know that they have gone through a tragic event and are trying to make a new start. Mary does her best to try to settle in but she’s plagued by glimpses of a red-haired man and a group of children who are there one minute but gone the next. Is she going mad or is the house haunted?

Alternating with Mary and Graham’s story is the story of a family who lived in the house a century and a half ago. A 13-year-old girl, Eliza, lives there with her parents and younger brothers and sisters. Her little sister, Lottie, seems to know the people who live in the present-day part of the book and wants to name her kitten “Merricoles”, her version of the name “Mary Coles”. But Lottie also thinks she was once dead so no one listens to her. A mysterious red-haired man, James Dix, is discovered under a fallen tree after a storm. His entry into this family starts a disturbing escalation towards a terrible violence that you know is coming and there’s nothing you can do to stop it.

This isn’t your usual haunted house story, not at all. There are moments in this book when you wonder just who is haunting who. Can a grief be so deep that it can break through the barriers to a tragedy from the past? The two stories weave together in such a chilling way. There is also an exploration of the dark side of love and trust, both in Mary’s growing relationship with her neighbor, Eddie, and Eliza’s relationship with the venomous James. This is a terrifying story and a heart-wrenching one. There are many layers to the book and it’s one that I’m sure will reveal different layers when re-read. It’s profoundly deep and disturbing. The only fault I can find with it is that I felt parts of it went on for a bit too long. But it’s a story that I will not soon forget. Highly recommended.

Melissa says

Wow just wow

Shawna P. says

I tried so hard to like this because the reviews and synopsis sound amazing. The story is actually two different stories set more than 100 years apart. We have young Eliza and her family living on a farm at the turn of the century. Their world is turned upside down when a red headed stranger comes in the midst. Then we have Mary and Graham who have recently moved into the same place. The two are recovering from a horrible tragedy. This is a great plot, but I was completely torn with how to rate this book. Let's look at the pros and cons.

Pros

- Some parts did make me feel actually scared and I was afraid to turn out the lights.
- The writing is brilliant and the atmosphere is chilling.
- Mary's back story.
- Lottie
- The ending on Eliza's side was disturbing!

Cons

- I was bored the majority of the time.
- The dialogue between Mary and Eddie drove me nuts for some reason.
- I have no clue how Eddie played into this.
- The ending on Mary's side...so lost.

Overall, lots going on, great atmosphere and plot, but the characters...meh.

Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says

This book was honestly one of the most powerful I have ever read. In terms of stirring emotion, incredible writing and characters that just took my breath away, I cannot, cannot rave about this book enough. When I put this book down I was in a whirlwind of thoughts and feelings and it was somewhat like being shell-shocked. I have never read anything from Julie Myerson before by golly I will not hesitate to now. **What an absolutely spectacular book.**

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Liz Barnsley says

The one thing "The Stopped Heart" has achieved is to ensure that I read this authors back catalogue. This is some beautiful writing right here.

It is a story full of atmosphere, a truly emotional look at love, loss, life, death and all the stuff inbetween. Julie Myerson weaves a haunting and evocative web here as we learn about Mary, living with devastation, caught up in the moment unable to move on. Alongside her and us the readers, is Eliza, 100 years earlier, about to experience some devastation of her own.

As the narrative links the two characters, through event and circumstance, through emotion and a hint of other, Julie Myerson writes with true sense of feeling, painting a real picture of different lives lived in the same area many years apart. Tragedy links the two - this is both horrific and very real throughout - you know that something is coming for Eliza but trust me you will not be prepared. And Mary, her loss is tangible, you can taste it - as she struggles to maintain her relationship with her Husband, also grieving, as she tries to find some semblance of a life worth living, this is beautifully done.

This is about memory. About events echoing down the ages. About hearts broken into a million pieces and the struggle to mend them. I loved it.

Elaine says

This is an exceedingly atmospheric haunting ghost story told over two time lines. In the present, we have Mary and Graham who have escaped to the country to make a fresh start after a family tragedy. Little do they know that their new house was host to its own family tragedy 150 years ago and we watch events then unfold through the eyes of Eliza, daughter of the house at the time. It is a haunting read that is quite chilling at times, one that really got to me. I especially liked the characters and, indeed, both time lines has people who are just downright creepy who you wouldn't want to go near at all.

There is no demarcation between each time line in the book, so sometimes it did get just a little confusing until I realised that the modern day segments are told in third person and the historic parts in first person. Once I got used to it, it wasn't too bad at all changing from one time frame to another.

It is a good read which very cleverly drew me in, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Many thanks to the publisher via Netgalley for the review copy,
