



Diamond Dust: Stories

Anita Desai

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Upon the recent publication of *Fasting, Feasting*, critics raved about Anita Desai: "Desai is more than smart; she's an undeniable genius" (Washington Post Book World). The Wall Street Journal called *Fasting, Feasting* "poignant, penetrating . . . a splendid novel," while the Boston Globe celebrated Desai's "beautiful literary universe." Now, in this richly diverse collection, Desai trains her luminous spotlight on private universes, stretching from India to New England, from Cornwall to Mexico. Skillfully navigating the fault lines between social obligation and personal loyalties, the men and women in these nine tales set out on journeys that suddenly go beyond the pale -- or surprisingly lead them back to where they started from. In the mischievous title story, a beloved dog brings nothing but disaster to his obsessed master; in other tales, old friendships and family ties stir up buried feelings, demanding either renewed commitment or escape. And in the final exquisite story, a young woman discovers a new kind of freedom in Delhi's rooftop community. With her trademark "perceptiveness, delicacy of language, and sharp wit" (Salman Rushdie) in full evidence here, Anita Desai once again gloriously confirms that she is "India's finest writer in English" (Independent).

Diamond Dust: Stories Details

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Kate Schindler says

These were interesting. Not all about Indian families, it turned out. She's a great writer, and I loved the pictures she painted, but I was a little annoyed because I like my stories to have endings and hers mostly didn't. I just prefer closure to possibilities in my fiction.

Mandy says

I enjoyed this book on the whole, but felt that the book was written to describe or explain India to those who don't know it, and I was a bit fed up of the way things happen in India in the end. I wanted a tale about someone where India wasn't a part of the story.

Manish says

A wonderful collection of short stories from the inimitable Anita Desai. The best ones were probably the one recreating the buzz on a Himalayan highway caused by a stubborn driver refusing to move forward and the one detailing the travails of a single working woman living in a barsati in Delhi.

Shivam Dixit says

My personal favorite ones are winterscape, diamond dust and the man who saw himself drown. While in winterscape the evident hardcomings of indian parents are shown and how they are not able to adjust in the modern settings of their grownup children. It also shows the deep contrast between western individualistic approach and indian collective approach.

diamond dust is about how people are mad for their love and obsessions no matter how much anybody else tries to convince them. Man who saw himself drown is the best one of the lot where the protagonist wants an escape from real life but he is not happy even when he gets one.. in short it is a story collection containing some very good stories to be read for sure and deserves appreciation

Sandhya says

Lot of imagery, lyricism in the language, so Anita Desai isn't always the easiest authors to read - especially if you want to get straight to the point. I remember reading Cry The Peacock several years ago and not really grasping much of it - a very mystifying novel with lots of symbols and imagery.

So when I took up her book of short stories -Diamond Dust, I did it with some amount of hesitancy. The first story actually put me off awith its dialogues - which I thought didn't sound 'Indian' at all. When one writes about Indians and Indian setting in English, there is always a conflict wherein one wants to write elegant

English and yet retain the local flavour. I think Desai just discounts this, whereby some of the dialogues just don't ring true.

But don't let that put you off. Because there's a great deal of artistry in the book, the themes are different....the language is exquisite at points (yet, some metaphors didn't quite work for me).

While some stories may not be that easy to get through, there are at least a couple of them which are very accessible and enjoyable. My favourites were The Rooftop Dwellers about a single girl's predicament in a big city like Delhi and Winterscape, a evocative tale of two sisters, their shifting fates that ultimately becomes one!

Meera says

Diamond Dust an anthology by Anita Desai. The book is a collection of nine short stories. I always like to read short stories and having read many of them; good and some forgettable.

This novella was just alright. Stories highlight people, friendships, family ties, and one story about dog; (beautiful and sad). Some stories did not have a strong plot. However the writing and descriptions are commendable. I particularly liked four stories – 1) Winterscope 2) Rooftop Dwellers 3) Diamond Dust. 4) The Man who saw himself drown. Read this book, if you like short stories.

Thomas says

Diamond Dust is a hit and miss collection by a talented and versatile writer. Desai's characters and settings cross the globe; she is almost equally at home in America, England, Mexico or India. She writes about the upper educated classes with quiet sarcasm and she can turn her storytellers craft to a working class man and his dog with equal empathy. A truly global writer yet there is a sense of a craft being honed. Desai's short novels refine that and stretch her talents and, indeed, it is the longer pieces here which are more impressive. Some of the shorter stories are pleasant but not particularly memorable.

The title story is an exception. Mr Das and his wild dog is a darkly comic urban fable and one of the best in Diamond Dust. It provides a neat balance between sympathy and criticism of her main character, a man who loves the dog everyone in the neighbourhood hates. It speaks quietly about his undescribed character and lets the reader do the work themselves. The end is rather predictable but necessary for the story's moral, and to give the dog his wild, devilish, cursed nature. Another short story, "The Artist's Life" is a quiet, thoughtful piece about growing up that nicely encapsulates Desai's style.

Others don't do much; "The Man Who Saw Himself Drown" feels like you've read it once before, "Royalty" is an interesting social portrait but an uninteresting story, "Five Hours to Simla or Faisla" is a colourful and dynamic picture of a heated traffic jam in India but again doesn't do much as a narrative. "Winterscape" almost falls into the same category but it has a sad charm to it - two older sisters finally visit their son/nephew in Canada and find themselves facing a barrier of age, class, culture and language that makes the distance hard to bridge.

The last two longer stories are both great. "Tepoztlan Tomorrow" tells the story of a young Mexican academic returning home to his hometown and his family from America. The town is in a state of flux; the government and the city are encroaching with a planned golf course on the edge of town. Desai captures the helplessness and the disconnected feeling of returning home to a place you feel emotionally connected to but utterly distanced from and, in some way, angry at. It's one of those stories that contains a compact microcosm in its few pages, showing a handful of differing characters and opinions to paint a big picture and leave the details to be more carefully picked out.

The best is perhaps "The Rooftop Dwellers" which has some great descriptions of urban Indian life. It is about a young, trying-to-be-independent woman who has rented a rooftop apartment from an unpleasant, conservative family while she attempts to start a career at a small literary journal. The characters are finely drawn and Desai's sympathy for the young writer feels like autobiographical empathy (no idea if that's true but there's a strong sense of realism and experience in the story). The frustrations and the limitations of her new life mingle with a sense of stubborn ambition and hope, a fighting, creative character wanting to break out of her surroundings and turn that rooftop, which she initially sees with such positivity, into something truly freeing.

All in all an enjoyable collection of stories without a really bad one in the bunch - two real highlights at the end make this very much worth the read. 6

Lynda Alsford says

I enjoyed the stories and I like her use of language. I found it easy to imagine the places she described and got into the story and characters quickly. But as always with short stories I am often so sorry it isn't a longer story. It ends too soon. We read this for my book group and it encouraged me to maybe try one of her novels.

Randa says

Snapshots from the lives of ordinary people in Britain, Canada, India, and Mexico among others. These stories have rich descriptions but they do not really contain a plot in the traditional sense. They are best viewed as short vignettes in the lives of the people. There is a little shadow of sadness in all of them. My favourite was Rooftop Dwellers, the last story in the collection.

Tya says

I think that one of the most beautiful things that an author can do in a short story collection is creating a voice so distinctively and so aptly for the circumstances of each story and each character that you almost forget they are all written by the same person. And that's what Anita Desai did in Diamond Dust. I can just imagine her carefully mixing and choosing words in her palette and painting with such purpose and technique that when you look closer at the finished work you can observe the fine little intentional details that have made it up. This is one of those books that both transformed me as a reader and confirmed the idea that writing really is an art.

Kristian says

I liked this collection of short stories. I picked up this book randomly out of my boyfriend's collection and decided to give it a try. I'm glad I did. There were a lot of special moments in the stories. My favorite is the last story, about the single woman in Delhi.

Yahana says

An ivory tower literati product that selectively perpetuates a dark, dreary image of India that is popular with some foreigners and the pseudo elite of India. Shades of Dilli Durbar.

I found little beauty in this book, only sorrow.

Kavfrou says

is actually a dog known as the beast.

anita desai writes beautifully and even though i don't really like short stories, hers are compelling and intriguing.

I especially like the rooftop dwellers.

Rahat says

Hit or miss.

On the whole, Anita Desai is an impressive writer. But I believe her short stories lacked cohesion; some stories just seemed pointless. Admittedly, each story was unique, but they lacked consistency.

However, the last one, *The Rooftop Dwellers*, was delightful and memorable. This story, I believe, saved the entire short story collection.

Elaine says

I'm not a short story fan, but I'm very impressed with the stories in this book. Very well written, clear characterisation, and good storylines, but just too short.

It was an enjoyable and worthwhile read.

