



## Half Past

*Victoria Helen Stone*

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## **Half Past** Victoria Helen Stone

At forty-five, Hannah Smith is at a crossroads. That's her spin on it. The reality is she's divorced, jobless, and moving back to her family home in Iowa to keep an eye on her mother, who's slipping into dementia. Her return stirs up the same unnerving sense of disconnect Hannah has felt since childhood—always the odd girl out, the loner outshone by her two older sisters. Hannah knew the feelings of hurt would come back. But she never expected fear. Because when her mother looks into her eyes and whispers, "You're not my daughter," Hannah is beginning to believe it's not just the rambling of a confused woman.

It's the truth.

Now Hannah's following the trail of a family mystery to the dark coast of Big Sur, where years ago a lie was born—and buried. As frightened as she is to unearth it, Hannah knows this is the last chance she has before her past—and all its terrible secrets—are lost forever.

## **Half Past Details**

Date : Published September 19th 2017 by Lake Union Publishing

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Author : Victoria Helen Stone

Format : Kindle Edition 254 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Thriller, Mystery Thriller

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## From Reader Review Half Past for online ebook

### Monique says

After discovering Victoria Helen Stone with the magnificent JANE DOE, I'm working my way through the author's catalogue, starting with HALF PAST. Once again, Ms. Stone demonstrates her originality with another atypical heroine. Hannah Smith, let's be honest, is unpleasant, selfish, somewhat irrational regarding a recent discovery, and totally unreasonable in the way she treats her mother, who suffers from dementia. Hannah is not a very appealing character, I would not like to have her for a sister, and I would not want her as a friend. Hannah is exactly the sort of character that makes me dislike a book, or maybe even stop reading. So why five stars, you may ask? Because once again, Victoria Helen Stone presents us with a veritable literary tour de force: her writing is compelling, powerful, and shows us this character, Hannah, with all her flaws and vulnerability, and it's just impossible not to want to read more.

HALF PAST is utterly riveting, and I'm still not sure why I needed to see what Hannah would do, how things would turn out, but I could not stop myself from reading, and this is the mark of an extraordinarily gifted author: that I must read, even though I couldn't relate to Hannah's way of thinking most of the time, which usually makes me disconnect from the story, but with HALF PAST, I only wanted to know more. The writing is mesmerising and utterly flawless; there are no lulls in the story; the secondary characters are amazingly well-fleshed out; and the ending was entirely unexpected, and some parts utterly shocking. I have read two of Victoria Helen Stone's three books so far, and she is now on my go-to authors list; absolutely brilliant.

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### Anjana says

The theme of the book is what made me select it in the first place. A definite different concept to the ones I have read before.

Parents are what we always take for granted. We always fall back on them in all crisis. But Hannah in the middle of a setback in life and career realises that her mother is not actually "her" mother. The author has brought out Hannah emotions and the turmoil in her mind when she learns the truth about herself, well. Also, the book lead me into a world, I till date, did not know existed- commune promoting polygamy. The book kept on twisting and turning always, till the last where the author has bought it all to a good, well explained, reasonable end.

Just one negative comment I have, there we some places when I could not completely connect with the book. There exists some book where we wholely become part of the main character, that was missing here. Sometimes I felt lost during the read. But, overall a good read. I did want the book to end with Hannah getting back on the so called "normal" life, but may be I am also being part of that judgemental society out there.

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### Rissa says

3.5 ??

Thank you so much to Lake Union publishing via netgalley for sending me an ARc copy of Half past by

Victoria Stone . Half past will be released on September 19, 2017.

Hannah youngest of three is the only one who comes to the nursing to home take care/visit their mother everyday. Hannahs mother has dementia and doesn't care about hannah or remember hannah at times, only her other two daughters. But Loving daughter hannah soon finds out that she is adopted and trouble arises.

Hannahs sisters want her to stay and take care of their mother still but hannah is sick of being the good girl and heads off to California to get away from the craziness that is her family.

In California Hannah is on a mission to find herself.

I really enjoyed the language used and the description/descriptive details i felt pulled into the world. I also really liked that Hannah was older which we dont see in many thiller books. And even though Hannah is older she didnt want kids so her interaction with children and how she made it clear that she wouldnt put up with children was very realistic to our society today.

I didnt find the twists and turns of the book to be very exciting after the first few chapters. Also i didnt connect with hannah. She seemed a bit immature for her age and i felt lost during certain parts of the story.

But the ending was well explained and i thought it was a logical ending, clearing up some things i was confused about along the way.

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### **Krissy says**

My guess was way off.

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### **Sarah Joint says**

This book is many things. It is sad and heartbreaking. It is thought-provoking. And unexpectedly, it is fun. Hannah is a fun character to follow, and an unusual one. Going through a divorce and a turbulent time in her life, she is unpredictable and at a bit of a loose end. It's an original story with some surprising twists, and I really enjoyed it. A great exploration of family ties, loyalty, and plenty of secrets.

It is Hannah's turn. Her turn to sit with her mother, read to her, talk to her, desperately try to get her to have conversations like they used to. Leaving behind her life in Chicago for the slow Iowa life where everyone knows your whole family. It is not something she particularly enjoys, made worse by the fact that sometimes, her mother doesn't seem to want her there. **Her mother tells her that she isn't her daughter. Though everyone assures Hannah it is only because her brain is affected by the dementia, it stings. But not nearly as much as when she finds out it's the truth, thanks to a simple and previously unknown disparity in their blood types.**

Hannah never felt like she fit in with her family. At 45, she never had children or focused on family life... she basically let herself be talked into marriage. She's going through a divorce. Her sisters have happy families, and were always closer with each other than with Hannah. Hannah had only her father, who died years ago. When she learns there's actually a reason why she felt like a bit of an outsider in her family, she

feels a pull to return to California, where they're from. **By returning to where she was born and trying to find people who were around back then, perhaps she will be able to find her real mother... and who she is supposed to be, herself.**

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### **Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says**

#### **Wow! A totally absorbing five star novel!**

This is my second book by Victoria I've devoured in the last few days and I want more please. This is one underrated and talented author and as a Book Publicist I'd love to represent her and tell the world to read her writing.

This one is hard to review without spoilers as there are oodles of secrets and reveals in the plot. A young woman who feels she never quite sat right in her family uncovers something life changing and it takes her on a deeply moving, intriguing and emotional journey.

The plot is fantastic and it got more interesting as the pages turned. Its a novel you can read in one sitting and lose yourself in. Again, the author shines with her character building. I love the human imperfections and raw emotion in this story. Its got so much to keep you wanting more. I honestly didn't want it to end.

As for reveals, oh yes! As for the end reveal? Despite me suspecting it, my breath still was held for seconds reading it to myself. Really clever writing. The pacing of the book is spot in, not bored for one word of it.

Despite some sad moments, it gave me a lot of warm feelings too and there is a realism about the characters that leave me now feeling I know them. This was a guilty pleasure, escape from reality book that I highly recommend.

My followers know I read 300+ books a year so if I really rave on a book it's with good reason. If you like character driven books, plenty of plot and real life drama with some great reveals then you will love this. Do read Evelyn, After by this author too.

Five stars from me. As a newly published Author myself just stepping out, I aspire to write this well. Fans of women's fiction like Jodi Picoult or Diane Chamberlain might find this author appeals.

Loved it! Don't think twice, get this one on your Kindle bookshelf. Kudos Ms. Stone. I'm eager for your next book so hope you are writing! For anyone keen on my reviews fund me on social media and Goodreads by searching for Booklover Catlady.

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### **Adele Buck says**

I have always loved Victoria Dahl/Helen Stone's "difficult" characters. She writes people who feel like they don't fit, who have experienced trauma, who just don't want the same things as "everyone else" with a lot of sensitivity and complexity. Hannah is one of those characters. I've read in other reviews that some readers don't connect with Hannah. I get why that would be, but I also really \*did\* connect with her because she's seeking for the reasons why she's always felt out of place. She's uncompromising. She's complicated.

The way her story rolls out wasn't as compelling for me as some of VD/HS's other works. It's most comparable to "Evelyn, After," which was structurally fascinating and emotionally gripping. Because the mystery in this one is from 45 years before, it loses some of the punch it otherwise might have had.

As always, VD/HS is an auto-buy for me and I'm looking forward to what comes next.

I was given an advance reader's copy in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Alicia says**

“Half Past” by Victoria Helen Stone

Three daughters who are taking turns sitting with the mother at a memory care center. Two the woman still recognizes. The other is told “you are not my daughter!” Not once, not twice but several times. Blood tests confirm this to be true.

So begins Hannah’s journey to Big Sur to find her mother. What she slowly puts together piece by piece is shocking and hard to take in. It is not a version of her family she would ever have believed had she not had the verbal and written proof. It was a past that not even she ever guessed.

With strong, relatable, deep, and flawed characters, Victoria Helen Stone, has written a novel that is realistic, honest, strong, at times raw, and always moving.

The novel is fast paced, yet has its moments of calmness where one is able to learn more about the characters and the storyline. It is a twisting turning novel that has straight paths...but very short ones. It is a puzzle put together little by little and piece by piece that leads to shocking and overwhelming finds that, in the end, Hannah decides to keep from her sisters. She has come to realize everyone has their burdens. It is how they carry them that matters. And for now, that was enough. She would sit with them and accept them and move forward with a life she chooses to live and a self she chooses to be. Right now that is sitting with her mother.

A moving, enthralling, deep and exhilarating novel...one with a bit of something for everyone.

Rating: 4.8

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\*\* I voluntarily read and reviewed an advanced copy of this novel. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

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### **Debi Lantzer says**

As part of the NetGalley community, I often have an opportunity to read books before they are released to the public. Since I'm always open to authors I wouldn't ordinarily be familiar with, I was excited to read the subject of today's post, Half Past by Victoria Helen Stone.

I didn't know what to expect from this book, but based on the description I was looking forward to the book.

I was very pleasantly surprised to find that I couldn't even put my Kindle down once I started reading, and I ended up being glued to the story and reading the book from start to finish on one airplane ride from Florida to California!

Right at the beginning I will admit that this book is a bit difficult to provide a review without spoilers because there are so many "secrets" and twists in the plot.

Hannah Smith is a very real and complex character. Although her mother has dementia and doesn't remember Hannah, she shows up at the nursing home every day to take care of and visit her mother. She is the youngest of three daughters but her mother doesn't remember her at times. Hannah's sisters want her to continue taking care of their mother, but Hannah is tired of being "the one" and decides to run off to Big Sur, California when she learns that she was actually adopted.

Hannah slowly puts together the story - a puzzle put together little by little and piece by piece - and it leads to shocking and overwhelming finds that Hannah decides to keep from her sisters once all has been discovered in the end. Hannah comes to accept and realize that everyone has their own burdens in life and that it is how each person deals with them that actually matters.

Half Past is a fast paced story that gives us moments of calmness. Hannah is a wonderfully complex but very real character and the story is a twisting one that keeps readers thoroughly engaged throughout. The author has written an honest and moving novel that provides readers with very believable characters with human imperfections with raw emotions.

I later learned that the author, Victoria Helen Stone is actually a romance novelist by the name of Victoria Dahl, when I read the "about the author" at the end of the book. I haven't read anything by either of her names, but I have to say the book was very interesting and I'm surprised she has published more than 25 romance novels.

Thank you to Netgalley for providing a digital copy of Half Past by Victoria Helen Stone for review. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own.

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### **Suzanne Brockmann says**

I loved this book!!

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### **Sandy \*The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice\* says**

EXTRACT: 'She wanted to be back in Chicago. Back in her apartment. In her bed. In her marriage. She wanted to wake up, dry and warm, and realize the past six months had been a bad dream. A nightmare that didn't make any sense in the morning. Why had she come back to Iowa? And how could Jeff possibly hate her so much? It was nonsense. Jeff didn't hate anyone. And what utter foolishness to think her sweet steady mother wasn't her mother at all.

THE BLURB: At forty-five, Hannah Smith is at a crossroads. That's her spin on it. The reality is she's divorced, jobless, and moving back to her family home in Iowa to keep an eye on her mother, who's slipping

into dementia. Her return stirs up the same unnerving sense of disconnect Hannah has felt since childhood—always the odd girl out, the loner outshone by her two older sisters. Hannah knew the feelings of hurt would come back. But she never expected fear. Because when her mother looks into her eyes and whispers, “You’re not my daughter,” Hannah is beginning to believe it’s not just the rambling of a confused woman.

It's the truth.

Now Hannah's following the trail of a family mystery to the dark coast of Big Sur, where years ago a lie was born—and buried. As frightened as she is to unearth it, Hannah knows this is the last chance she has before her past—and all its terrible secrets—are lost forever

**MY VIEWS:** Half Past by Victoria Helen Stone took me by surprise. It is good. It is damned good. Very damned good. I was expecting something a little Schmaltzy, with a fair bit of romance thrown in. Don't ask me where I got this idea. I just had it, okay? Instead I got this emotionally raw, absorbing story of family relationships that kept me glued to my Kindle from start to finish.

Stone is actually romance novelist Victoria Dahl, which I did not know until I read 'about the author' at the end of the book. Not that I have ever read anything by either of her names. But after publishing more than 25 romance novels, her work has taken a darker turn under a nom-de-plume. Go Victoria!

Stone has given us a wonderfully complex but very real character in Hannah Smith. Growing up she had pushed boundaries and always wanted more. More answers. More freedom. She had fought hard against the restrictions her parents placed on her. She'd run off, walked away, skipped out on her obligations. And now at 45, she's still doing it. Still walking away from things, running away. Turning her back and moving on. Still wanting more. ....Half Past is a good reminder that we should be careful what we wish for. A glowing 4.5 ?

Thank you to Lake Union Publishing via Netgalley for providing a digital copy of Half Past by Victoria Helen Stone for review. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own. Please refer to my Goodreads.com profile page for an explanation of my ratings. This and other of my reviews can also be viewed at [sandysbookaday.wordpress.com](http://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com)

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### **Lexxie (un)Conventional Bookworms says**

#### **This review was originally posted on (un)Conventional Bookviews**

Half Past is a story of resilience and hope, of finding oneself during a midlife crisis, and coming out on the other side ever stronger.

Story:

Hannah was able to carry Half Past on her own, even if she needed other people in her quest for the truth, she was self-sufficient, and stronger than she thought. I felt like someone hit me at the very beginning of the story, because even if her mother was suffering from dementia, what she said to Hannah has to have hurt. A lot. And then, when her two older sisters arrived, they weren't exactly understanding of her predicament.

After Hannah found out her mother wasn't her biological mother, even if her name was on Hannah's birth

certificate, Hannah had to leave. Half Past follows Hannah across states, towards both her past and possibly a new future. Digging around in both her own and her parents' past did not endear her to anyone - not to her sisters, and not to the locals in California.

Half Past is a great title, because it goes well with the story on more than one level. One could argue that Hannah has arrived to the middle of her life, and is, thus, herself half past. One could also see half past to mean a glass half full, and even in the face of a lot of difficult situations, Hannah was positive more often than not.

In a way, Half Past is also a book about mourning. I think Hannah started mourning her mother as soon as she got diagnosed with dementia. And with the news that her mother wasn't her mother, she got a second layer added on to that grief. Stone did a fantastic job of portraying a woman who has seemingly lost all - but who still has the strength to shoulder the pain for the people she cares for, shielding them from things they might not recover from.

Characters:

Hannah felt like her whole life was unraveling before her eyes. Slipping through her hands like sand. And the only way she found to deal with it all was to run across the country to find out what was hidden in her parents' past.

Rachel is Hannah's oldest sister, and she had it all together. At least on the surface. Even if she was not exactly open to what Hannah felt she had to do.

Becky is Hannah's other sister, and while she's more sympathetic to Hannah's feelings, she doesn't fully understand her.

Writing style :

Half Past is written in third person point of view, past tense, and from Hannah's perspective. Even if Hannah's story was very different from my own, I felt connected to her, and completely understood why she was so discombobulated.

Feels :

I felt both the heartache and the pain Hannah felt. But I also really felt the hope. Hannah was the kind of character that is able to deal with all the hardships life can bring on.

*Sucking a deep breath of clean, disinfectant-free air into her lungs, she fled to her car. The feeling was terrible on every level. She shouldn't want to run from her mother. The woman was sick. Dying. And losing everything bit by bit as she did it. That was true suffering. Hannah's frustration didn't even qualify as a hangnail in the face of her mom's slow, steady decline.*

*Not that she'd been all "buck the system." She'd gotten As and Bs in high school and had chosen accounting pretty quickly in college. She'd never been a bad kid, really; she'd just been full of an energy that had vibrated at a different frequency from the rest of her family.*

*Why the heck was this so exhausting? All she did was sit there and talk with her mother, help her with lunch and the bathroom, keep her supplied with music and television show. It was barely work at all, but Hannah felt weak as a baby.*

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## **ErinMickC says**

I picked up this book although it was out of my romance wheelhouse, due to the author. I've always wanted to read something by Victoria Dahl, but none of her recent releases have appealed to me. However, I was captivated by the blurb of this book. There seemed to be a mystery that was compounded by the difficulty of family relationships...so, I picked this book up. I am so glad I read *Half Past!* I was captivated from the very first sentence and didn't put this book down, reading the entire thing in less than a day.

There is something so relatable with this heroine. Hannah has always felt a little bit like an outsider in her family, so when she learns that the woman who raised her isn't actually her birth Mother, so goes on a quest to find answers. Along the way, she learns some unsettling facts about her family, but she also learns a whole lot about herself.

Stone's descriptions of Iowa, San Francisco, and Big Sur were captivating. It was easy to picture Hannah driving through the corn fields or along the coast searching for her story. Overall, I did find Stone's prose a bit wordy and I skimmed at some points, but the actual meat of this story was truly excellent. 4 stars for *Half Past!*

*A copy of this book was provided by the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.*

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## **Shannon says**

### **Half Past**

**I Picked Up This Book Because:** The last Victoria Helen Stone book I read wrecked me in all the best ways.

#### ***The Characters:***

**Hannah Smith:**

#### ***The Story:***

I am sad to report this book did not have the same results. While well written it left me feeling blah overall. I realize now more than ever I need my characters to interact with other characters. Hannah spent a lot of time in her head. It doesn't work for me. Once we got deep into the plot and there were other people to hash out details with I started to enjoy the story more. I didn't agree with a lot of Hannah's actions. I think there was much more she could have done before she flew halfway across the country but in the end I see how that does not serve the plot well. I enjoyed the mystery and the unraveling. I don't even know what I would do if I were to find out one of my parents is not my parent. I don't think it's a thing you can decide on if you aren't in that position.

Writing: Good.

Forward Motion: Great pacing. It felt natural

Overall Interest: It wavered during a lot of the beginning of the book

Length of Reading Time: Fair

Re-read-ability: No.

***The Random Thoughts:***

Oh and Hannah's sisters really made me mad. I'm glad she was able to overcome though.

***The Score Card:***

**3 Stars**

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**Johaly&#x1f5a4; says**

That was it for Gabriel?! No more tacos and whiskeys? Ugh my fragile heart. I loved that guy. Maybe it's my biased weakness to Spanish men but Gabriel was sexy as hell. But I get it. The story was bigger than him.

Great, quick read! It was full of all the drama and mystery I had hoped for. I think I can say I am definitely a fan of Victoria's edgy style. Already preordered "Jane Doe".

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