



Solace of Stone

David De Wolf

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a story about making choices

An earthquake has destroyed the center of a Sicilian town. Architect George Nobel is charged with creating a plan for its restoration. At about the same time, someone finds a mysterious piece of art in a South American jungle - a relief carved in slate. Art historian Charlotte Vermeer gets the assignment to catalogue the relief. Solace of Stone chronicles their separate but intertwined stories.

Both Charlotte and George struggle with emotions of regret, loss and loneliness. Where can people find solace: in nature, work, philosophy, art... other people? If you want to embrace life, should you lose yourself in Beethoven and Brahms, or the breaking of waves on the reef? Are we imposters? What happens if we try to escape from our reality? David de Wolf gently probes these and other questions of human nature throughout Solace of Stone.

A book of living life to the fullest.

<http://www.solaceofstone.com>

Solace of Stone Details

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Author : David De Wolf

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From Reader Review Solace of Stone for online ebook

Wanda says

Architecture and art history provide a rich framework for this introspective story of regretted choices and second chances. Although it ends where it begins, the book's setting is always changing: from Amsterdam to New York and on to Rome, and from virtuoso operatic performances to underground rock concerts. I think this would translate well to the screen because of the varied scenic locations and the strong musical and visual art elements throughout the book.

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Read program.

L.A. says

Solice of Stone by David de Wolf is a three hundred eighty page romance written in third-person. The point of view is switched back and forth between George Noble and Charlotte Vermeer, the two main characters.

As the book starts off George and Charlotte bump into each other and it's revealed that they have a shared history, from their old college days. After that, their lives are written separately, each from their own point of view. Different situations briefly makes them think of each other throughout the course of several years, and later on they even realize that they were both at the same location and never knew it. Life takes George and Charlotte for many unexpected twists and turns, and ultimately they grow and mature. Their lives reconnect neatly at the end of the book.

My only complaint is that there are pages upon pages without any dialogue. Nothing wrong with that, many people like that, but I personally don't care for it. It's too easy to over indulge. I also get a better sense of the character when there is dialogue, rather than the narrator just telling me everything.

Grady says

The choices we make

David de Wolf makes a strong impression with this his debut novel. He is technically facile as a wordsmith, writes with uninterrupted ease despite a story that by nature is dichotomous, and has a seek ability to create atmosphere both of the nature sort and the architectural sort - possibly related to his career as a journalist with degrees in language and art history. He captures the reader's attention with page one and holds that firm line of concentration to novel's end - traits rarely found in debut ventures.

SOLACE OF STONE combines tales of drama, crime, life, love, and mystery as accompanied by a veneer of the realm of the arts and music. George Noble is a struggling architect whose life feels flavorless - a failed marriage, a life style that borders on ennui, and a sad prospect for a future. All of this literally 'explodes' when his firm sends him to a Sicilian town devastated by an earthquake and George is assigned to take

charge of its restoration. Concurrently art historian Charlotte Vermeer wins an assignment to travel to South America to study a mysterious piece of art - a relief carved in stone - that has appeared in a South American jungle. Two disparate characters who meet quite by chance, each on a mission that has art as its focus, and coincidence as a major theme of these two avenues of stories that eventually, we realize are recreations of the past shaped by the choices each has made that allows us as readers to start and end the story in the same moment - a very clever and satisfying writing device.

The beauty of this novel is in the writing: de Wolf has a fine sense of observation as we flow through the great cities of Rome, Florence and on to the mysterious beauties of Sicily, and yet at the same time he offers the gift of introspection, suggesting that all that is important in life is living in the moment. And that is where the solace lies.

Grady Harp

Brittney says

I received a copy of this book through a giveaway on Goodreads

The book begins at an airport with a coincidental meeting between the two main characters George Noble and Charlotte Vermeer. After trying to avoid making contact with Charlotte, due to them having a past, George ends up sitting next to Charlotte on the airplane. Their past quickly makes its way to the surface and it becomes the focus of the conversation between the two. After this chance encounter their lives are written separately. Both George and Charlotte are faced with many obstacles and challenges throughout the years; they face loss, regret, and even loneliness. Will both George and Charlotte be able to take everything they have learned over the years, and find something that makes them happy? Will they be able to find solace and if so could it be they find it in each other?

This book is beautifully written and by the time you finish it you are left with a lot to think about. It is not a book that one should read quickly, it should be read at a slow enough pace to gain full appreciation and understanding of the book and the themes throughout.

The only problem that I had with the book is Italian and French are often spoken throughout the book and not having studied either language made it a little harder to read at points since I had to stop to translate what was said.

Overall it is a wonderful book and I would recommend it to anyone who wants a thought provoking book. I cannot wait to see what else David De Wolf has for us in the future.

David de Wolf says

Foreword Clarion Review

(4 Stars)

This beautifully described coming-of-age story serves as a rich and fascinating guide through Europe's

cultural landscape.

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James Goulding says

David De Wolf's great novel is an extended meditation on a number of themes that concern adults as they approach late middle age. The lives of Charlotte Vermeer and George Nobel are inextricably intertwined, even when distant in time and space. George is an architect, working at a huge reconstruction project in Sicily; he is suffocated by the deadly silence of loneliness. Charlotte Vermeer is an art expert, who struggles with the cycle of hope, trust, disappointment and frustration that characterises her love life.

After many years apart, what have they learned, and will they find solace together?

Michael Todaro says

'Solace of Stone' is a touching and complicated love story.

George and Charlotte, the book's two protagonists, struggle with emotions of regret, loss and loneliness. Where can people find solace: in nature, work, philosophy, art...other people? If you want to embrace life, should you lose yourself in Beethoven and Brahms, or the breaking of waves on the reef? David de Wolf gently probes these and other questions of human nature throughout 'Solace of Stone'.

I recommend this book to fans of Proust's 'A la recherche du temps perdu', or anyone who prefers soulful and mature writing to shallow sensationalism.

Ami says

Solace of Stone is a very unique book. There is a distinct story being told . The writing seamlessly weaves narrative with philosophy and psychology. This is not a simple telling of events, but rather the way the characters experience the things that happen to them. The story explores thoughts, ideas and dreams.

This is the story of two characters, George and Charlotte. They have known each other for a long time and have a long and shared history. As life goes on and they grow up, George and Charlotte also grow apart from each other. Despite their history, they relate to each other as acquaintances. It seems that the longer they have known each other, the less they can relate. Things are very tense between them after Charlotte writes a less than flattering article about George for a major magazine. Although that was many years ago, George still feels betrayed.

The book begins with a chance meeting between the two of them after George's flight is delayed for several hours. He does not want to talk to her and tries to avoid her, going so far as to hide behind a palm tree. After

all George's efforts to avoid her, he ends up seated next to Charlotte on the plane.

Charlotte first insists that it would be childish to bring up the article after 18 years. She then says that she would be very sad if George only remembered her because of that one article. Charlotte tries to change the subject, but George insists on talking about it. Charlotte hesitates and relents a tiny bit as she says that she probably would not write what she did if she had the chance to do it again.

George longs to pour his soul out to Charlotte and earnestly tries to push her out of his mind at the same time. He turns away from her, trying to ignore her and push everything out of his mind. Despite himself, the memories come flooding back to him.

"For a moment he wanted to let it go, but the indignation of past injustice was superior to the present pragmatic reality. Injustice wasn't relative, nor did it become relative over time".

This is where the real story begins. Solace of Stone explores George and Charlotte separately while clearly showing how their stories are intertwined. The writing is beautiful, and the descriptions vivid. The story takes place throughout Europe. While reading, you will feel like you are in Sicily, Florence, Rome and many more enchanting and picturesque locales. The story brilliantly ends right where it began, bringing us right back to the chance meeting.

Solace of Stone is a book about art, and it is a work of art in of itself. Art both is a backdrop and a central theme. The writing itself is also very artistic and poetic. The characterization is poignant, and you will find yourself relating to both characters even when they are in conflict. You will be able to see things from the character's point of view so thoroughly that you will start to feel like you are George and Charlotte.

The main theme of this book is living in the moment. Far from being carefree and irresponsible, it encourages living life to the fullest. It explores the concept of recognizing and accepting what you have in life and using your innate intuition and creativity to get in touch with your hopes and dreams. In the course of studying and interpreting the lives of George and Charlotte, the narrative explores the paths that each of them could have taken. The ending cleverly shows how the decisions they made independently effected each other.

This is a hard book to sum up. It will answer many questions you have while reading, but in the process, it will create more questions and possibilities to ponder. Despite this, you will feel like you instinctively understand. There are many deep and heart felt moments in the text. The main message is one of triumph, and you will feel filled with hope as you read.

The book is relatively short with nine chapters and an epilogue. However, I guarantee you will not breeze through it. It is best read if you can set aside time for it. You will need to read this book yourself to gain a full appreciation and understanding of it. I would highly recommend Solace of Stone to anyone. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and I guarantee you will not be disappointed.

Ester says

Breathtakingly beautiful.

Serious readers of fiction (and literature for that matter) should read this novel more than just the once. It's subtleties, architectural imagery, and analysis of life are all impressive. Even casual readers might find it

enjoyable, but because of the pace and storyline, this is really one for serious drama and love story aficionados. David de Wolf's story of two lives (George and Charlotte) intertwined in the past and present is both dramatic and breathtaking. Those who stick to the very end of the novel will be well rewarded. A must book for all serious readers of fiction.

Dan Curnutt says

This book came to my attention through a marketing source. At a price that can't be beat I decided to give it a look. It is a bit out of the genre of the books I had recently been reading. My last several books had been mystery or crime novels. They were filled with action.

Solace of Stone is not filled with action, so it didn't grab my attention right at the beginning. It was a bit difficult to get into. But then my other curiosities and training kicked in. This is more a study of two people and their lives than it is a fast paced action packed thriller.

George Nobel is an architect who has lived in the shadows of his department head for way to long. He is married, but bored. He makes a decent wage and doesn't really have to worry about bills, but that doesn't mean his life is good. He has enough to worry about.

In working on his education he lied and committed an act of theft that would leave most of us dumbfounded. He took a museum document and changed it so that it would match the conclusions of his thesis rather than disprove his thesis. This was a form of deception and lie that would haunt him for the rest of his life.

Charlotte Vermeer is an art historian who loves most of her work but struggles with life. She is fed up with a long term relationship and has kicked him out. She finds that even the cities that she is sent to are alluring until she gets there and then the devolve into the hum drum of life and become secondary if not just down right boring.

She is emotionally damaged. She tries to find solace in the arts, in paintings, in poetry in philosophy. But nothing really seems to reach the depth of her soul. She is wandering through a sea of loss, doubt, disappointment and boredom.

George and Charlotte are two people who need each other and they need a jump start back into life to learn to live it to its fullest. But that just doesn't seem to be what is going to happen.

David De Wolf gives us a deep long look into the normal lives and routines of common people. As you read you will find yourself asking the question, am I like George? Or am I like Charlotte? The answer you might find could frighten you.

This book is a lesson to be learned, savored and mulled over. You will find yourself trying to answer questions and suggest changes in the way of life for our two main characters. But sadly, they don't hear us and they don't seem to really find their ways.

While this book was not at my top of the charts favorites to read, it gave me plenty to ponder and think through while in the midst of digesting it. This is not just an action packed spy novel that you read and then forget. This is a piece of work that challenges your view of life and does a pretty good job of showing you how many of us live our lives, filled with boredom, loneliness and just a downright need to do something

different to shake things up.

David De Wolf's writing style is good. He builds the characters (maybe a bit too much) and describes situations and themes that are normal every day situations but he makes them pop and come to the surface and then he pushes you to think them through and see how maybe your life mimics them a bit too much.

Enjoy.

Gloria Son says

I received this book from a Goodreads giveaway and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I found the beginning and end fitting since it began with at an airport and ended there as well which seemed to close off the story nicely. I usually love books that question humanity and force you to reflect deeply and this book made me do just that.

Melinda says

I received a free copy through Goodreads.

This book was interesting. It wasn't what I expected, because it turned out to be better than I had imagined and contained a lot of depth.

After being introduced to both Charlotte and George, we are then led to the story of the events that each of the character underwent prior to that fateful meeting at the airport. I find both George and Charlotte interesting. Both are seeking something more in life, yet don't quite realize what it is until certain events occur that are out of their control.

You can feel the raw emotions and turmoil that George goes through, especially dealing with his slowly fading father and the impact of his architectural designs on himself. You get the feel of Charlotte's hesitation in finding the right partner who isn't like her father and the similarities between her and the relief.

I wish an explanation/origin of the relief was found. Having what happened to the relief in the end was sort of a let down and felt like an easy way out. Still the relief did have a huge impact on Charlotte and ultimately her choices.

Ultimately, this book made me think about how the choices you make define and shape what happens next, and how our lives are interconnected in some ways.

The ending was pleasant and unexpected. Definitely a nice way to wrap things up, both involving Charlotte and George.

Amy Vey says

What a wonderful book! I had a hard time putting it down. People will always wonder if they are making the

right choices, if they made the right choices in the past and will continue to reflect on them throughout their life. You have to find meaning in your own life, and remember that we all are interconnected with one another, whether it's been in the past, now, or in the future. Synchronicity, fate, free will, it all plays a part of who we were, who we are now, and who will be. Just remember you are never alone as we all have to face these challenges/lessons in life. The only reason I didn't rate this a 5 star book, is that I struggled a tad with the architecture descriptions. I do understand those sentences needed to be stated to show who George and Charlotte were, but some sentences/paragraphs got a tad long for me. Other than that, no complaints! Loved how the resolution with the Nobels came about, although facing challenges with his family throughout the book. Charlotte did so well herself with her "thought processes" that got her back on track to living a full life despite the circumstances that she could have played the victim role instead of the victor. Well written book David! Thank You for giving me the opportunity to be a Goodreads winner and to read such a wonderful "life thoughts" driven book!

S.L. Hoyte says

Reviewed by Sheri Bebee for ReaderViews 8/20/2013

Captivating – a must read!

5 Stars

“Solace of Stone”, by David de Wolf is an extraordinary story about life and love, filled with elements of drama, crime and mystery, and exploding with culture of the arts and music.

The story takes place in various locations in Europe and in New York City, beginning at the JFK airport in New York with the ‘coincidental’ meeting of the two main characters, George Noble and Charlotte Vermeer. George does all he can to avoid Charlotte, for they are not strangers, yet they end up sitting next to each other on the plane. The past quickly makes its way to the surface and distant memories flood the conversation. Our protagonists consider the choices they made and the resulting consequences that altered and shaped their lives up to this point. From here the author tells their stories of the next 18 years in a separate fashion.

George is a struggling soul who seems to have lost his drive for life. He is an architect with a major firm but is given no creative license. He has been married for many years to Alice, who is a big disappointment and has been cheating on him with a neighbor. He is stuck in his dull, uneventful life. When George is given the opportunity to restore a town devastated by an earthquake, he sees this as the catalyst that turns his life around, yet he can't even muster up any passion for the project. I found myself thinking time after time of the famous quote from Henry David Thoreau – “Many men lead lives of quiet desperation”. George was so depressing that at first I didn't want to finish this book, but I'm SO glad I did! George eventually comes around and after a family tragedy, realizes the importance of the town restoration and decides to return to Rome to finish what has been started.

Charlotte is a highly reputable art historian who struggles to overcome a past that has left her scarred and tentative to move on with her life. She risks love with Viktor, a world renowned opera singer, in spite of all the red flags that go up during their relationship. Aside from her naiveté with Viktor, I found Charlotte to be much more relatable and realistic than George. She is strong and determined and when she becomes pregnant she faces the truth about her relationship, knows what she has to do to create the best life possible for herself and her child, and never looks back.

The end of the story takes us back to the beginning. Will George and Charlotte find solace in their coincidental reunion? "Solace of Stone" is captivating and it leaves you with a lot to think about, even after you've finished reading.

Thalia says

This is the story of two lives interweaving, both at inappropriate and more appropriate moments in time, whether due to coincidence, destiny or fate, or a combination of factors. It is a story about living in the moment, following intuition and dealing, therewith, whatever life may present. As such, it is a story about making the most of your lot in life, without losing touch with yourself and your innermost hopes and dreams.

The story begins and ends with the 'chance' meeting of its two main characters, George and Charlotte. The couple have a shared history, although life's inevitable challenges has left them almost friendly strangers. The story's opening chapter briefly describes their re-acquaintance, where things seem tense, before coming to a halt, as George is swallowed by a well of memories. These memories then open the story, as we follow George and Charlotte, albeit separately, in the events that led them to this moment in time. The story's end then cleverly connects back to the opening scene, where the two re-acquaint, and we discover what effect the passage of time and the choices they have each made has meant for their relationship.

In the beginning, we see George struggling to live with himself and the lies he has told (both to himself and those around him), which have left him feeling his life is a farce. We also witness Charlotte struggling to come to terms with herself and her life, although for quite different reasons, as Charlotte has a painful past which has left her wounded and hesitant to move on. However, as the story progresses we witness that, no matter how difficult certain circumstances may seem, there is always light at the end of the tunnel for those who stay true to themselves and persevere in life.

The story is beautifully written, as we gain a true insight into the characters, their feelings and their motivations. The author, David de Wolf, also cleverly uses both art and architecture as background themes, enforcing the fact that life itself, in all its intricacies and possibilities is, undoubtedly, a work of design, selection and remodelling; in itself, a work of art.

de Wolf also grants us vivid descriptions of some of the more enchanting parts of Europe, including Sicily, Florence, Rome and Provence, to name a few. The parallels he draws with the Old World effortlessly enhance the backdrop and mood of the story.

Top recommendation.
