



Stopping for a Spell

Diana Wynne Jones , Chris Mould (Illustrator)

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How do you get rid of unwelcome visitors? Three stories which show that magic might be the answer, but you should always be careful about what you wish for! The Four Grannies When Erg and Emily's parents go away, they arrange for Granny to come and look after them. Unfortunately, they forget to say which granny, and all four turn up. Individually they're manageable, but when 'Strict', 'Worrier', 'Stingy' and 'Saint' get together it's a different matter -- and when Erg tries to magic them away, the result is an awesome 'Supergranny'! Chair Person One day Simon and Marcia's parents decide to get rid of the old, striped armchair -- next day Chair Person turns up, bad-tempered, demanding and with very bad manners. No one seems able to get the better of him, until Auntie Christa turns up too. Who Got Rid of Angus Flint? How do you get rid of a guest who picks you up by the hair, won't let you play the piano, watch television or shut the window? Candida and her family try everything -- they poison his stew and litter the house with roller-skates in the hope that he will fall over them -- but nothing works! Surely they can't be stuck with him for ever?

Stopping for a Spell Details

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From Reader Review Stopping for a Spell for online ebook

Hollyberye says

I love Diana Wynne Jones and her creativity and writing skill--but this was dreadful. The main first story has nothing attractive or redeeming about it, and the narration was extremely irritating. So glad to finally get through it (I tried repeatedly over the years). I am glad there is an audience for this, as seen by ratings and reviews--but not for me at all. It is a bit sad as she is a much beloved fantasy writer.

Ashley Lambert-Maberly says

This was frustrating. She's among my top-10 favourite authors, but these stories were so similar to each other that, when read together, they just felt repetitive and irritating. Still three stars, because it's Diana Wynne-Jones and she's a wonderful writer, but this would be my least favourite work of hers so far.

Read if you're a completist, otherwise skip--you can do better.

(Note: 5 stars = rare and amazing, 4 = quite good book, 3 = a decent read, 2 = disappointing, 1 = awful, just awful. There are a lot of 4s and 3s in the world!)

Nicola Mansfield says

A collection of three previously published stories by Diana Wynne Jones. The first two were published as individual titles in Great Britain and the third was included in a British anthology. They were then collected together and published for the first time in North America as this combined edition. The stories all follow a theme of the "uninvited guest" and are aimed at the younger reader, perhaps 10 and under. They are hilarious fantasies told with tongue firmly planted in cheek and should please readers of any age who like a bit of wicked fun. Diana's fans will find these short stories to be little gems they may not have come across before and they are sure to delight Wynne Jones' followers. It will remain a keeper for my shelves.

1} Chair Person (1989) - Pure delight! An old chair that's been sat in front of the TV for longer than anyone can remember is losing its stuffing and the family finally decides to replace it. After a spill from a second-hand shop's toy magician's kit brings the chair to life the pretentious chair person moves in, won't leave, embarrasses and bosses them, making them desperate to find a way to get rid of him. Hilarious! (5/5)

2) The Four Grannies (1980) - This one feels a bit Roald Dahl-ish. Erg and Emily's parents go away for four days and call a granny to come look after them for the duration. Due to divorces, the children have four grannies and each is horrible in her own unique way. None can take on the job, but of course, in the end, all of them arrive after the parents leave. Nasty grannies and a magic chopstick-wand make for a wild first day. (4/5)

3) Who Got Rid of Angus Flint? (orig. The Fearsome Friend) (1975) - This is the shortest story and quite silly, but nevertheless quite fun and certainly will entertain its intended young audience of perhaps 7-9. Angus Flint, a friend of Dad Roberts from college days calls upon him out of the blue asking if he can stay

for a while since his wife has just left him. Upon his arrival, the family is dismayed to find him a belligerent, self-centered, bossy, ungrateful tyrant who rules their roost. The parents manage by escaping by day leaving the kids with the brunt of Angus's bullish eccentricities and finding a way to make him leave. Fun but no explanation as to where the magic comes from and the story is mostly geared toward younger children. (3/5)

Melissa McShane says

It's hard to rate Diana Wynne Jones low, because even at her worst she's still far and away one of the best writers out there. I wouldn't say these stories are bad, but they are certainly uncomfortable, with the repeated motifs of ineffectual parents, horrible infiltrators, and just plain malice. I realized this time that each story was written in a different decade, and yet all are thematically very similar--probably an intentional choice, but still interesting how the theme of overbearing, rude, manipulative people is one Jones keeps coming back to.

Trina says

It was interesting enough to make me want to read other books by this author.

Adobe says

A collection of three short stories: "Chair Person" (an old armchair comes to life with "a sofa opinion of himself"), "The Four Grannies" (four grandmothers converge on a boy who has invented a wish-granting machine), and "Who Got Rid of Angus Flint" (an obnoxious houseguest avoids all attempts to dislodge him).

All of the stories are short and sweet, which (unfortunately) means that they never achieve the convoluted greatness of Jones' novels. The stories here are just surreal snapshots with simple resolutions. However, Jones does a superb job of characterizing the central antagonists in each story. In particular, Chair Person is the most amiably malicious innocent that I've encountered since Charles Dickens' Harold Skimpole.

April says

Stopping For A Spell by Diana Wynne Jones was one of my later Dewey 24 Hour Readathon books, I read it around 2 a.m. so please be forgiving of my fuzzy detail recall, as I don't have a copy of Stopping For A Spell sitting in front of me as I write this review.

Read the rest of my review [here](#)

S.N. Arly says

This is a collection of three short young adult novels(I'd say novellas, really). I find Jones to be an uneven

author. At times her writing is spectacular and her humor dead on. Other times (like this collection) I'm not sure how the work got published. There were moments that I enjoyed, particularly in "The Four Grannies" but overall was not impressed with the collection, and could have done without the other two tales completely.

Eve says

Stopping for a Spell, by Diana Wynne Jones, is a collection of three short stories. The first story is about two children who have to deal with their living room chair coming alive and turning into a person; Chair Person. This Chair Person wreaks havoc in their lives, and they have to find a way to turn him back into a chair. The second story is called Four Grannies. This is also about two children, only these children have to deal with a series of grannies who babysit them. Each granny is eccentric in her own way, and the children have to survive these grannies. The last story is called Who Got Rid of Angus Flint. This is about a girl who has to deal with a strange guest who stays with her family. He is terrible. Her family tries everything to get rid of him, but he just continues to stay and ruin their lives.

I thought these were quirky stories, however definitely more suited for children. I found myself bored by some of the happenings and absurdity of the events, and it is something I would read to children I babysit. I thought they were still delightful, however. There are no content advisories.

Hollowspine says

Read over two days to my folks. Three stories centered around unwelcome guests and magic gone awry. Kids who enjoyed the zaniness of Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle and the magic of Bruce Coville's stories or Harry Potter will find this funny and magical.

Robyn says

Should truthfully only be at 2 stars "it was ok", but I'm generously giving the third star for loyalty to the author. One of the things I love about DWJ books is that when there's a truly awful person, they get what's coming to them in the end. That happens in these stories, as well, but the characters are not awful in the usual DWJ way. They're cringeingly awful. They're difficult to read, they're so awful. They're not fun awful, they're horrifying in the way they use and take advantage of people. Also, in one of the stories, I absolutely was not on Erg's side, so it was difficult to feel that it all came right in the end without Erg getting a wallop.

Deserthomemaker says

A thoroughly delightful collection of stories.

Sally says

While I have read most of Diana Wynne Jones' books, and liked them - especially the Chrestomanci ones - I didn't particularly enjoy these three stories. It felt like she was trying too hard to produce some fables. Fables they were, but what I found lacking in each was a character that I could root for. She did create some characters that were easy to NOT like. These stories were just a bit too weird, and for kids, probably a little too creepy. Still, when one likes an author it's probably worthwhile to check out all that she/he has published.

Rachael says

I read this book in one sitting over the course of a couple of hours. To me, its main allure was just that--it was short and easy. I'm still trying to work my way through everything Diana Wynne Jones ever wrote (just twelve left!), and these three stories feel aimed more at younger readers (middle grade or so) than some of her other works.

The first story, Chair Person, was mildly irritating. I loved that the family was so polite, but I hated that they were so polite that they let Chair Person affect their lives so much. They were all clearly so irritated by him but did nothing to try to dissuade him! It makes me crazy when people do that in stories. Like many Diana Wynne Jones stories, it was a little chaotic and tied up neatly at the end.

The second story, The Four Grannies, was also mildly irritating (for the sake of plot) and very chaotic. It was another story about people being irritating and other people not doing anything about it. It frustrated me that Erg kept making wishes to get the grannies off his back instead of just praying for Emily back.

The third story, Who Got Rid of Angus Flint?, followed a similar theme: an unwelcome houseguest who is irritating, disrupts the family's lives, and could probably be sent away if someone just yelled at him.

So all three stories were, generally, fine for what they are. They are pretty simple stories, highlighted with chaos, people doing what they want, and other people just accepting that that's how things are. Diana Wynne Jones is very good at writing people with strong and forceful personalities, which can translate into irritating people sometimes. In the case of these three stories, they were entertaining and easy to read, but ultimately, not my jam.

Eden says

This book contains three short stories. The first is about a chair who turns into a person and is very annoying. The second is about four grannies who are quite very different from one another, and the third is about a house guest who just won't leave.

I've read a short story collection of Diana Wynne Jones' before and loved it; her short stories are wonderful and very unique. The ones in this book are also unique and a lot of crazy things happen in them. I enjoyed all of the stories, but I think *Who Got Rid of Angus Flint* is the one I like the best. But I will say that Chair Person and Angus Flint were both very annoying and I definitely wouldn't want to have to deal with them. I think I could handle the four grannies much better.

Anyway, the stories in this were enjoyable and I really had a fun time reading them. It was always exciting to turn to the next page and find out what was happening next. It's a nice collection of short stories.
