



# Throw Like a Girl

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## Throw Like a Girl Jean Thompson

A master of short fiction whose "best pieces are as good as it gets in contemporary cction" (*Newsday*) returns, as Jean Thompson follows her National Book Award finalist collection *Who Do You Love* with *Throw Like a Girl*.

Here are twelve new stories that take dead aim at the secrets of womanhood, arcing from youth to experience. Each one of Thompson's indelible characters -- lovers, wives, friends, and mothers -- speaks her piece -- wry, angry, hopeful -- about the world and women's places in it.

## Throw Like a Girl Details

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Author : Jean Thompson

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# From Reader Review Throw Like a Girl for online ebook

## Emily says

(N.B.: Jean is a friend of mine, so I'm likely biased.) I've always been a big fan of her short fiction, more than her novels, and this book is a fine addition. Her best stories are populated by strong lead characters (both in the sense that they are believable and that they have particularly strong personalities); these most often occur in her stories written in first person.

Not all of the stories in this book were home runs. Some were a bit tedious and fell short of my recommendation. However, I believe it's a difficult thing to impart originality without treading into the realm of seeming to try too hard. In truth, a minority of pieces written by any author--even the classic greats--are anthology-worthy. This book had at least one or two stories that really moved me; this, in my opinion, is enough of a feat.

This book has garnered excellent reviews from very reputable sources (NYT, Chicago Tribune, and Kirkus, to name a few), and features a glowing blurb on its cover from David Sedaris. For these, I am very proud.

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## Cortney says

Jean Thompson reminds me of an earnest version of me. Like she's not afraid to say the things I think sometimes, even if those things might sound a little cheesy or sentimental or too-true to be said out loud. But she's always right, and always good. I like to read Jean Thompson with a pen, so I can underline the sentences that are especially true.

So.

This collection of short stories didn't seem as magical as *Who Do You Love* (which I love). Less love, I think. Instead, soul-sucking affairs. I get the idea from these that marriage is a contract that can be as easily violated as a sexual harassment policy or a Republican budget. So, sad. So, cold. So...true, but a different kind of true than I was used to from her. I kinda want to call her and ask her about it, but that would make me a creepy stalker stranger person, so.

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## Qinghua Lin says

Small stories, different life.

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## Maria says

The writing is superb and as one review puts it, these stories are "gritty and grueling." While I found myself relating to a couple of the women characters, my overall feeling while reading this was, "gosh what a miserable, bitter, sad group of women." I kept hoping for just one happy story in this collection. On the other

hand, any artist that can keep you coming back to the images they've created must be worth something, and that is exactly what I find myself doing with this particular collection of Thompson's. I'm debating the 3 and 4 star rating, but for now will stick with the 3. Maybe I'll pick it up again, when it's not the middle of a cold, gray winter and re-consider my rating.

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### **Theblackrock says**

I love it, I recommend it for people who want to find new ideas.

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### **Cait Poytress says**

I love happy endings as much as the next girl. Sunshine, rainbows, fluffy white kittens... what's not to like? There is something satisfying in closing a book with a contented sigh, assured that everything has turned out just as it should. The good guys win, justice is served, love is requited, and they all live happily ever after.

I have a secret though. I love unhappy endings more. Well, maybe love isn't the right word. It's not like I *enjoy* reading about people suffering or dying miserable and alone. It's just that, for me, those stories pack more of an emotional punch. They affect me in a way that no fairy tale ever can. Tragedy, despair, unrealized dreams, missed opportunities, bad things happening to good people - these are the stories that get under my skin and inside my head, the stories I find myself thinking about hours and even days later.

Throw Like A Girl: Stories isn't as extreme in it's bleakness as anything by Flannery O'Connor (whom I love), but rest assured that there are no rainbows or kitties to be found anywhere. Instead you get glimpses into the lives of everyday people, warts and all, behaving as they do when they don't think anyone is watching. We all know that's not always pretty. But it's real, and I loved it.

Favorite stories: The Brat, The Five Senses, It Would Not Make Me Tremble to See Ten Thousand Fall, The Family Barcus, Throw Like a Girl

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### **Sam says**

I feel bad giving this a three-star review, because some of these stories really deserve something more. "It Would Not Make Me Tremble to See Ten Thousand Fall", for instance, in which a woman tries to make a life as a military wife and ends up abandoning her child to join the military herself, is one of the best character studies I've read in a while, and it's really to Thompson's credit that she manages to make the main character simultaneously believable and sympathetic. Unfortunately, this sort of empathy and understanding of character doesn't extend to every story. In "A Normal Life", the two lovers who make a new life after their old marriages fall apart seem like puppets moving at Thompson's will, and the seams in the story start to show once one of the pair takes a strange trip to Thailand. Thompson, like a lot of short story writers, tries to play ventriloquist with a number of different characters - as a realistic writer, it's pretty much your only avenue - and her failures cast a bad light on her successes.

That being said, however, the ratio of good to bad stories here is probably three to one, which is saying something. The real reason I can't give it more than three stars is that there are so many competent short fiction writers out there, and Thompson isn't really breaking any new ground. Why spend time reading

another realistic short story about people's lives, especially when the writing doesn't pop off of the page, especially when it seems like every other literary magazine is filled with similar stories?

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### **Brian Palmer says**

This anthology of stories by Jean Thompson (to quote from book's description) "take dead aim at the secrets of woman-hood, arcing from youth to experience." Apparently the secret of womanhood is not filled with happiness -- these are kind of depressing stories, on the whole, but that really speaks to my feeling of the moment. Mostly it's not about tragedy -- just trudging on through bleakness. Also, these are not stories about coastal elites in dynamic cities, to be somewhat mocking; most of them are not particularly pinned in time, but are set in middle of the country, unexcited settings.

A few highlights:

"It would not make me tremble to see ten thousand fall": probably my favorite story in the collection, featuring a young army wife who decides she needs to form her own identity (more important than waiting on her husband to return, more important than taking care of the baby when the grandparents are more than happy to ...), triggered in part by remembering a teacher from high school

"The Family Barcus": the character who is the focus, although not the viewpoint character, is a father who was raised as an only child, is intent on building and supporting a large family, until .... The ending surprised me.

"The Inside Passage": an affair gone badly leads a woman to briefly exile herself to Alaska.

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### **Sandydlarson says**

In the opening pages of Jamie Ford's stunning debut novel, *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*, Henry Lee comes upon a crowd gathered outside the Panama Hotel, once the gateway to Seattle's Japantown. It has been boarded up for decades, but now the new owner has made an incredible discovery: the belongings of Japanese families, left when they were rounded up and sent to internment camps during World War II. As Henry looks on, the owner opens a Japanese parasol.

This simple act takes old Henry Lee back to the 1940s, at the height of the war, when young Henry's world is a jumble of confusion and excitement, and to his father, who is obsessed with the war in China and having Henry grow up American. While "scholarshipping" at the exclusive Rainier Elementary, where the white kids ignore him, Henry meets Keiko Okabe, a young Japanese American student. Amid the chaos of blackouts, curfews, and FBI raids, Henry and Keiko forge a bond of friendship - and innocent love - that transcends the long-standing prejudices of their Old World ancestors. And after Keiko and her family are swept up in the evacuations to the internment camps, she and Henry are left only with the hope that the war will end, and that their promise to each other will be kept.

Forty years later, Henry Lee is certain that the parasol belonged to Keiko. In the hotel's dark dusty basement he begins looking for signs of the Okabe family's belongings and for a long-lost object whose value he cannot begin to measure. Now a widower, Henry is still trying to find his voice - words that might explain the actions of his nationalistic father; words that might bridge the gap between him and his modern, Chinese American son; words that might help him confront the choices he made many years ago.

Set during one of the most conflicted and volatile times in American history, *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* is an extraordinary story of commitment and enduring hope. In Henry and Keiko, Jamie Ford has created an unforgettable duo whose story teaches us of the power of forgiveness and the human heart.(less)  
Hardcover, 290 pages

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### **Katherine Haas says**

This was a brilliant collection, imho. I don't know why, likely because I loved it so fervently, I decided to peruse the ratings. What a mistake, when you want to defend something valiant. For those that found flaw, I couldn't help shake the feeling that I was languishing in some Community College class, entitled "Why Not to Like this Book", the decision reached before reason. Decide for yourselves, but I seldom feel the spark of having touched genius, and I got that feeling here.

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### **Yasmin says**

A review of this book was published in *Windy City Times* and a link can be found below.

Jean Thompson's *Throw Like a Girl* is an occasionally illuminating collection of short stories about women who inhabit what we call the 'middle class,' that fictitious category invented to reassure Americans that there is no economic inequality in the United States. If we all try just hard enough, we're told, we could land somewhere solidly in the 'middle' and live happily normal and humdrum lives.

Thompson's women live in the middle of middling lives: They are neither coming nor going; they live in the middle of the country; they live in the middle of life itself. They are caught in the process of daring themselves to leap one way or the other. Jessie in "The Five Senses" is between her comfortably middle-class parents and the wild boy who promises her freedom. In "It Would Not Make Me Tremble to See Ten Thousand Fall," Kelly Ann is between her high school graduation and life as a pregnant and married teen. In "The Woman Taken in Adultery," the married protagonist finds herself literally between her husband and her lover.

Thompson digs deep into quotidian details and the results are sometimes effective and surprising, but too often bound up in inevitability. She's best when she lets her characters function as if they had inner lives of their own, rather than forcing them to work inexorably towards the endings she has devised for them. The finest and wittiest story is "The Inside Passage," about an unnamed woman who has been unhappy in an involvement with a married man and is now in Alaska on a series of boat trips because "I had the luxury of going somewhere exotic to be miserable." At every stop, she calls her lover from pay phones under a different assumed name, hoping to talk to him one last time. The story's delightful unpredictability is matched by the woman's engaging cluelessness about everything, even the possibility of a bear attack: "It would eat me up while I was still thinking none of this was happening." Yet it's she who precisely and wryly

summarizes the nature of longing: "It seemed you ought to be able to aim desire like a lens, and pass your longing straight through it. Maybe I was simply out of range."

But for the most part, the trouble with Thompson's characters is that it's difficult to imagine they could survive outside the stories. Reading *Throw Like a Girl* is like being led through a series of doll's houses with all the little people manipulated and arranged precisely, caught in mid-sip during a tea party or on the way to bed. They are all compelled to move towards an upper-case Fate, and it's difficult to empathize with many of them. In a collection of stories about women, it seems more than a pity to not allow them this much—the freedom to lead messy lives, the freedom to become utterly lost.

This kind of overdetermination is especially evident in the dialogue, which often snaps and crackles too much, like sitcom banter. In "Holy Week," Olivia confronts Bruno, who wants to take her daughter away to Europe, "For money, Mamma give permission?" Comes the response, "For free, Mamma break your face." It's too funny ha-ha, like something that should be accompanied by a laugh track.

Endings can be similarly overdone. The finely tuned "Hunger" is about a woman who melts and oozes into dementia as her family mops up the mess around her and it ends on a surprising note that matches the quietly understated narrative thrust of the story. The same cannot be said about "The Five Senses," which works too hard to shock and jolt at the end. The best fiction takes one by surprise, not shock; the latter, unless rendered with skill, is a pale substitute for the former. Thompson would have done well to remember the distinction more often.

©Yasmin Nair

<http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/ga...>

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## **Emi Bevacqua says**

3.5 stars, great short stories. While I like the wide range of different characters and plots in this collection, the repeated motifs of adultery, depression and women otherwise falling apart... make reading this not super fun.

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## **Anya says**

I read this on the plane and it was perfect. Each story was long enough to keep me engrossed, but I had time to take naps and do the crossword in between reading. You really feel like you know every one of her characters, and the stories stand on their own. One of my biggest problems with short stories is that a lot of times I feel like they leave me hanging, or there's enough information left out that I didn't really "get" it. I'll have to read more of her stuff.

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## **Amanda says**

I'm a sucker for short stories, but as a huge David Sedaris fan, I've found that most collections pale in comparison. With Thompson's *Throw Like a Girl*, I found a solid collection of short stories that I enjoyed

reading almost as much as I enjoy reading David Sedaris.

That being said, however, the fact that both Thompson and Sedaris are strong writers is where the comparison ends. You won't find very much humor or wit in *Throw Like a Girl*, rather, with each story, Thompson introduces us to a new set of characters, all of whom are fleshed out so incredibly well that you find yourself so invested within the span of five pages that you wish the stories weren't "short" at all.

There's an intense human feeling throughout the entire book, which runs the gamut of characters, from the young army bride to old ladies baking pies. Thompson's stories are relatable and heart-wrenching, but never cliché or predictable.

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**Susan says**

Great short story writer. Really enjoyed these.

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