



On a Day Like This

Peter Stamm , ????? ??????? (Translator) , Michael Hofmann (Translator)

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A new novel of artful understatement about mortality, estrangement, and the absurdity of life from the acclaimed author of *Unformed Landscape* and *In Strange Gardens*

On a day like any other, Andreas changes his life. When a routine doctor's visit leads to an unexpected prognosis, a great yearning takes hold of him—but who can tell if it is homesickness or wanderlust? Andreas leaves everything behind, sells his Paris apartment; cuts off all social ties; quits his teaching job; and waves goodbye to his days spent idly sitting in cafes—to look for a woman he once loved, half a lifetime ago. The monotony of days has been keeping him in check; now he hopes for a miracle and for a new beginning.

Andreas' travels lead him back to the province of his youth, back to his hometown in Switzerland where he returns to familiar streets, where his brother still lives in their childhood home, and where Fabienne, a woman he was obsessed with in his youth, visits the same lake they once swam in together. Andreas, still consumed with longing for his lost love and blinded by the uncertainty of his future, is tormented by the question of what might have been if things had happened differently.

Peter Stamm has been praised as a “stylistic ascetic” and his prose as “distinguished by lapidary expression, telegraphic terseness, and finely tuned sensitivity” (Bookforum). In *On a Day Like This*, Stamm’s unobtrusive observational style allows us to journey with our antihero through his crises of banality, of living in his empty world, and the realization that life is finite—that one must live it, as long as that is possible.

Praise for *Unformed Landscape*:

“Sensitive and unnerving. . . . An uncommonly intimate work, one that will remind the reader of his or her own lived experience with a greater intensity than many of the books that are published right here at home.”
—The New Republic Online

“If Albert Camus had lived in an age when people in remote Norwegian fishing villages had e-mail, he might have written a novel like this.”—The New Yorker

“*Unformed Landscape* has a refreshing purity, a lack of delusion, a lack of hype.”—Los Angeles Times

On a Day Like This Details

Date : Published July 8th 2008 by Other Press (first published July 2006)

ISBN : 9781590512791

Author : Peter Stamm , ????? ???????? (Translator) , Michael Hofmann (Translator)

Format : Hardcover 240 pages

Genre : Fiction, European Literature, German Literature, Novels

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Michael Hofmann (Translator)

From Reader Review On a Day Like This for online ebook

Andy Miller says

A novel about a Swiss native, Andreas, in his 40's who teaches and lives in Paris. In the first chapter his girlfriend comments on his "emptiness" Her observation is supported as we learn more about his life; he lives in a sparse apartment, has few friends, is detached from his job, has lost contact with his brother and brother's family who are his only living relatives.

Reading this I was reminded of the protagonist in the Stranger which is reinforced when Andreas gives a book by Camus as a birthday present in the only party he actually attends in the book.

Andreas picks up a novel about a love between a student and an au pair which is strikingly similar with his experience as a student when he fell in love with an au pair. This prompts a series of flashbacks while at the same time he learns he may have cancer. This leads him to wonder if his failure to act on his one love caused his life of emptiness while at the same time confronting the possibility of his life being cut short by cancer. At this time he begins a relationship with a student teacher(who may be the most sympathetic character in the book) who of course is the same age as he was when he made his life altering choice not to commit to the au pair.

A very interesting, thought provoking read. I was initially disappointed in its ambiguous ending but I eventually appreciated the ending, the ambiguity reflects Andreas's life and the role of the reader in deciding how to interpret his life and this book

Ben says

I'm a fan of Peter Stamm's short stories (especially the collection, *We're Flying*), and thought I'd try some longer fiction. This novel reads quickly and feels almost like a long short story. Andreas, a teacher of German in a school outside Paris, is floating through his life when he's caught unaware by a medical diagnosis. Fearful of the results, he opts to sever his connections with the school and his life, and sets himself off on a course of reckoning with a past that's never been far from his thoughts.

The story's clear and engaging, though it feels a little monotone. It's hard to tell whether that's Andreas bleeding into the narrative or just Stamm's writing style in a longer piece. I certainly felt infuriated by Andreas at points, which I think we're meant to do, but it's hard to get too excited about a middle-aged man waffling over the decision to live his life or not. The cover flap describes him as an anti-hero, and therein lies the key, I suppose. I'll have to give another Stamm novel a try next.

Mor?TeZa says

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Christopher Taylor says

The challenge with this novel is to care. The story suggests the main character, Andreas, is about forty. He spent eighteen years in Paris teaching and now he wonders why. His life has been empty, without purpose or affect. He is handsome so he has had ample sex but no emotional ties. No ties of any sort. Adrift. And he doesn't much care. So why should we?

Peter Stamm's writing is spare. Understated. No lush descriptions. No violent outbursts. Everything flows very smoothly. But watching that sleek surface flow past – calm, controlled – we become like Andreas – indifferent. In fiction, as in life, emotion is two-thirds of it; and if not two-thirds, then half. And if not half, then you begin to wonder whether you have lived, whether there is a story here after all.

The narrative is third person. We hear what people think – not much. And what they feel – even less. Andreas has a crisis – in a mild way. And he takes drastic action – in a calm way. Everything is in keeping with what we have already seen. It is all beyond arm's length. It is across the street. You can't touch the characters. They move in sight but out of reach. And barely within hearing. They are no one you know. Or are likely to care about.

Ibsen said that when he first started a play the characters were like people he had seen in a railway station. After further work on the play the characters were like people he had known for a few weeks. And after yet more work – when the play was done – the characters were like intimate friends.

Peter Stamm should have worked on this novel until the characters became like intimate friends. Then he should have shown them to us in that light. And, if the answer is that he did and they are – if this is who Andreas and the others are in the full – flat, indifferent, shallow – then why on earth should we care?

Megan Rowe says

Well, this book was very depressing, but at the same, I did enjoy it.

I appreciate the fact that Stamm set out to write a story, and, while accomplishing this, also wrote about why we turn to stories. He wrote about nostalgia in an extremely focused way that I appreciated, and he was careful with his words.

11/16-I had rated this 4 stars before, but I changed it to 5. I cannot stop thinking about this book.

Niloo N says

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SARAH says

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Yasmin says

John says

At first, I was reminded of the main character in *Night Train to Lisbon*, whom I liked. Can't give this one three stars, because I went from feeling neutral about Andreas here, to not liking him much by the end. Setting and description are well done, but I guess it's a matter of lacking "European sensibility" rather than a translation issue I feel. Not interested in reading more by this author

Rokhsana says

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Mohsen.khan72 says

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Tim Parks says

This is my favourite Stamm. A wry, laconic, deeply phobic and very funny account of a man's dealing with work and women.

Cindy Leighton says

"Everything would be much easier if you could see yourself as a victim, he thought, a victim of your childhood, of fate, of the people you had grown up among, and finally too, as. victim of illness. But in order to feel himself a victim, he had to believe in the possibility of another, better life. Andreas believed in nothing but chance. He loved the curious coincidences and repetitions that life threw up, against all logic. He loved the surprising patterns that came about in the sky, or on a body of water or in the shade of a tree, the continual tiny adjustments in the same overall context.. Nadia called in nihilism; his own word for it was modesty."

This is exactly how this whole book goes - you think it's going to be a pitiful sad story filled with regret about a man who has never married or had a family, never really been in a committed relationship or even had a deep friend, facing a possible fatal diagnosis - and yet, and yet, it's just not that sad and pitiful. It always turns - Andreas seems to find enough joy, enough meaning, even as he contemplates a world in which no one will miss him in or even remember him in twenty years. He is not terribly likeable - not particularly nice to the women he has "relations" with. . but at some level endearingly honest and vulnerable.

I kept wanting to not like Andreas, or to find the book boring, but it just totally hooked me in. Once again I am a total sucker for a well developed sense of place, thoughtful language, and a well developed, reflective character. Stramm delivers all of this.
