



## Plan B for the Middle Class: Stories

*Ron Carlson*

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## **Plan B for the Middle Class: Stories** Ron Carlson

In his new collection of quirky, bittersweet stories, Carlson observes the men and women of the middle class, people who find themselves settling uneasily into lives they never envisioned for themselves. Carlson uncannily captures the complexity of his characters' inner lives.

## **Plan B for the Middle Class: Stories Details**

Date : Published November 1st 1993 by Penguin Books (first published 1992)

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Author : Ron Carlson

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# From Reader Review Plan B for the Middle Class: Stories for online ebook

## M.E. says

This is a great book, don't get me wrong. The reason I rated it a two is because I have a feeling it is targeted more towards a more middle-aged crowd. Most of the story's characters have already had, or about to have, children. Being a teenager whose main interest is scifi and fantasy, I wasn't too interested or invested in the storylines. They were, I will admit, very well written.

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## Megan says

If books can be judged by the number of sittings in which they are read, Plan B for the Middle Class would get high marks. I devoured it in two long sittings, punctuated only by an obligatory night's sleep. I can only guess (why does one love a book??) that my total attachment to Carlson's stories was wrought by his ability to reproduce life on the page as well as the best of them. The characters' voices and lives are warm, comfortable, at the same time as they are wondering, despairing, exultant. They describe life in the same terms that I understand life, only better, more articulate. In the story "The Summer of Vintage Clothing" a middle aged woman observes three young teenagers from a window:

"They think they're in a movie. I remember it, the feeling. You sit around with your fingers under your chin waiting for someone to ask you what's the matter. It's the age of loveliness. Everything is terribly important and terribly lovely."

How true, and yet I never really knew it till now (no wonder I fell in love with Jane Austen during those years). Is that what good authors do? Present as a revelation an idea you've had all along?

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## Michael says

I love this best of all his collection. He's at his most creative, whimsical, and funny in this book. "Fort Bragg" is a story I keep going back to, as is "On the Deck of the U.S.S. Fortitude." Fantastic.

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## Sean says

I've noticed that Ron Carlson usually splits his story collections into three parts. It usually seems like part 1 is for more straight-forward, serious stories. Stories in Part 2 are generally satirical monologues. Part 3 is reserved for dark, but still comical material. In most collections of his I've read, Part 2 is a bit weak, but Parts 1 and 3 are amazing. I feel the same way about this one.

Standouts: "The Golf Center at Ten Acres" is one of my favorite short stories ever written and "Blazo" is absolutely beautiful.

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### **Scott says**

I could just as easily give this four stars. A collection of short stories, there are hits and misses. I would certainly recommend it.

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### **Barner says**

I found this book which Rocky had given me years ago when Bonnie mentioned the Ron Carlson book she enjoyed so much. This is a collection of short stories and a couple of them ( first and last) are wonderful.

My favorite is "Hartwell." Carlson has a great sense of humor which comes at the reader in a sideways manner. These stories are enjoyable to read, offer fun, true insights into the characters and leave the reader smiling.

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### **Brett Starr says**

Whats your Plan B?

Ron Carlson's second volume of short stories, much like his other stories are superbly crafted and suck you in, taking you places you never expected to go or be back at.

Part 1 consists of three stories - Hartwell, DeRay & Blazo, of those, Hartwell was my favorite and was a peferct opener

Part 2 is five stories, two of which I really enjoyed -

On the U.S.S. Fortitude  
Fort Bragg (5 star short story gold)

Part 3 gives you the last three stories in the collection and has my two favorites in the book -

The Golf Center at Ten Acres  
Plan B for the Middle Class (5 star short story gold) funny, heart warming, heart breaking story about life

The amazing thing about Ron Carlson's short stories is that he can do so much in so few pages, highly, highly recommended collection!

Enjoy~

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## Leslie says

Some very funny stuff here.

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## Frederick Bingham says

Short stories about various topics. The title story is about a guy who has just lost his job, and goes with his wife to Hawaii on vacation. At the same time he relates a first sexual experience he had where he grew up in Utah.

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## Harley says

I have a stack of short story books and I'm reading from all of them. It makes it confusing. I loved the first story in this one, and am reading the second one. He's funny and compassionate.

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## Scott E says

3,3,2+,1,2+,1,2,3,2+,3,3

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## Kat says

I had heard about Ron Carlson's short story collection on a podcast, I think; the title sold it to me. 'Plan B for the Middle Class', alternative lives unlived by mediocre human beings and assumed it would be another inspired by Raymond Carver book of stories. Yes and no, Carlson is not as puritan about language as Carver, and the characters are perhaps ordinary, but interesting. Some more than others. What I found to stand out more was the tone of the stories. Interestingly I've spent most of this year reading short stories, largely by female writers and after a while you can pick up on nuances in tone and style. Sure, each writer has their way with prose but there's a difference between reading Lorrie Moore and Ron Carlson, however slight. But I wouldn't put this with Mark Richard's 'The Ice at The Bottom of the World', where you need to maintain a sobriety to get through them.

A difference in this collection is that Carlson's is not afraid to venture from stark realism (of the middle classes) and pen comical and playful plots, such as 'On the U.S.S. Fortitude', where a mother is becoming increasingly frazzled waiting for her children to return to a space station and huffing about keeping the place skid mark free. I enjoyed the story 'Fort Bragg (How subliminal advertising changed my life)', as well as being funny it has a running tone, keeping the narrative flowing and on the move, from one event to the next. It perfectly describes that auto-pilot mindset we have when we drive a car and forget that we are even driving. There is a story on baseball, something I have no knowledge or interest in - being Australian- but somehow Carlson makes it readable.

'The Summer of Vintage Clothing' is a dip into nostalgia and about how our own families can be, at the end o

the day, just a group of strangers. The last story is also the title, 'Plan B for the Middle Class' and it is wonderful. There is a line in there, among many good lines, that the narrator utters as he sees his father at the airport: "He doesn't look older at all. He looks, and this has my mouth open, just like me. It took them almost forty years, but my genes have jelled". It is in a whole a great story about our alternative lives that are unlived, what plan are you on?

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