



## Tooth and Claw

*T. Coraghessan Boyle*

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## **Tooth and Claw** T. Coraghessan Boyle

Since his first collection of stories, **Descent of Man**, appeared in 1979, T.C. Boyle has become an acknowledged master of the form who has transformed the nature of short fiction in our time. Among the fourteen tales in his seventh collection are the comic yet lyrical title story, in which a young man wins a vicious African cat in a bar bet; "Dogology," about a suburban woman losing her identity to a pack of strays; and "The Kind Assassin," which explores the consequences of a radio shock jock's quest to set a world record for sleeplessness. Muscular, provocative, and blurring the boundaries between humans and nature, the funny and the shocking, **Tooth and Claw** is Boyle at his best.

## **Tooth and Claw Details**

Date : Published June 27th 2006 by Penguin Books (first published 2005)

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Author : T. Coraghessan Boyle

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# From Reader Review *Tooth and Claw* for online ebook

## Jason Koivu says

Slackers, drunks, bartenders, drunken bartenders, casual drug users, and a whole host of ne'er-dowells populate story after story of *Tooth and Claw*, a collective, mostly contemporary look at the modern day, average joe.

I don't recall the last time I enjoyed reading go-nowhere character sketch stories as much as I did this collection! That's not to say there are no exciting plot turns or hilarious situations gone wrong. Humor is plentiful herein. But it's the language that bought it all together. The words slid from the page in a don't-want-to-put-it-down pleasant flow and seldom did I put it down, except towards the end of the book when I neared my fill of drinkers getting their drink on. However, even repetition did not tarnish my overall enjoyment.

TC Boyle, TC Boyle, TC Bloody Boyle! If you live in So Cal, visit libraries and book shops, or join a book club, you are bound to hear the name TC Boyle sooner or later. Usually sooner than later and usually often. I was beginning to feel a little inundated with the Boyle after a while and I hadn't even read any of his books. I don't like to be goaded by peer pressure, so I stubbornly hold out when I feel like the world is trying to shove an author down my throat. That means I miss out on some undoubtedly good stuff, but it also means I don't miss out on some crap. In this case I was missing some good stuff. I will definitely seek out another Boyle book.

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## Larry Bassett says

I want to start off by saying that I have read now or I should say listen to know in the past several weeks several TC Boyle audible books. Three of them were read by Boyle himself and the fourth one by another gentleman. I found them all really enjoyable for the most part which is why I sort of gang bang them altogether. And before I forget it I want to say that the end of this audible book had a 10 or 15 minute interview with Mr. Boyle which was fascinating. He seems like a fascinating guy he teaches creative writing in Southern California. I listen to this book in just a couple of days. I think I mentioned that these three or 4 or 5 books are all group together in the thick paper book hardcover TC Boyle Stories I I.

Was there a common theme in the 14 stories in this book? If you listen to Boyle talk you would automatically think that there couldn't possibly be one theme. He talks about that he starts with an idea and then disease where goes. He doesn't have a beginning middle and end in his mind when he starts. But having just read several of his short story collection's that were all published as separate books and later presumably all gathered together between two covers, I would say there was a little more alcohol in this batch of stories than usual and drugs. I would have a hard time describing what a TC Boyle story is like but at the same time they all seem very much like T C Boyle stories! When you read a lot of his stories over a relatively short period of time you do notice certain phrasings that he uses regularly.

He likes to read his own stories and when he goes out on book 2 hours he considers his readings performances. He said he will find a story he likes to do and works well with an audience so he perfect set and does it repeatedly. He loves doing it and it is obvious and listening to him that he does. So I don't think I have told you anything about any of the stories in any of these audible books But I have praise the author and

enjoyed listening to his stories.

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### **Matt says**

The most exciting collection of short stories I've read in... well, maybe ever. Boyle is a master of short fiction. The thing that strikes me the most is how much more closely life is like a series of short stories than it is like a novel. The characters, plot, and settings are already underway before we become familiar with them, and will continue to exist after we have left them. Boyle manages to express the meat of a moment in time, its importance in the life of the character, and its importance to us, then just roll on past the story, allowing the reader to continue to imagine what may become of these characters. If you enjoy the rare opportunity to think back on a friend you may have had five, ten, fifteen years ago and smile at the possibilities their lives have offered them, as well as the possibilities your life has offered you, then you will feel right at home in these stories.

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### **Shelter Island Public Library says**

Patron review:

"A hilarious ride through short stories concerning various environmental urgencies"

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### **Mbarkle says**

I liked this collection of stories, had already read a few in the New Yorker. I love the one about the guy who wins a serval in a bar. I keep mixing these up with the Denis Johnson story about the guy with the knife in his eye (Emergency Room, I think it is). All the hospital workers are tripping on drugs, things are just crazy. This book is along those lines, lots of drinking and a decided lack of direction in people.

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### **Paul says**

Perhaps 2 stars is too harsh. I give it 2.7 stars I guess.

Throughout life we stumble upon many stories which MUST be told, these, I am afraid, are not them. The writing talent is apparent, though the subject matter leaves much to be desired. I would liken it to a wonderful acting talent being cast for a horrible B movie. A project impossible to rescue. It was not all bad. As you would expect from a writer of this caliber, there were a few gem-worthy sentences to be extracted. Also, I did enjoy the stories, Dogology, Rastrow's Island, & Chicxulub. Besides these, I found the book tedious, as if you had made small talk with a stranger out of politeness but they rambled on without cease about their uneventful life story. I never like to leave a book incomplete no matter how uninteresting it is so the fact that I finished it is not indicative of its quality. As I have stated, the writing talent is apparent, I could just not escape the laborious subject matter. I have heard so much about his novels, I thought this may be a good introduction on varying levels to become acquainted with the author on an array of subjects. I was wrong. I will look into his more acclaimed works so as not to cast him entirely aside. I hope I fare well with his works in the future. Read this at your own discretion.

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## Cynical says

I enjoyed spending time in Boyle's world, just as I did when I read *The Tortilla Curtain* a while back, but I don't know if these stories really affected me the way the novel did. Someone else mentioned "Dogology" as a highlight, and I'd have to concur. That same person mentioned disliking "The Doubtfulness of Water" as a low point, and I'd have to agree there as well.

What Boyle does well here is create real protagonists--understandable, sympathetic (sometimes pathetic), and almost tactile. What he doesn't do is give the reader (or at least me) some sense that the events mean anything to the protagonists. Less plot arc and more plot line.

Still, these stories are so well written, the collection certainly isn't a waste of time.

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## Christine says

This collection of short stories by T.C. Boyle was a good read. Most stories captivated you - dropping you into a story, walking you through it, and then lifting you out at just the right time.

I enjoyed most of them. I must agree with other readers that "The Doubtfulness of Water" was just painful - I couldn't finish it. My favorite also concurs with most reviewers - Dogology is unlike anything I've read before. Loved it! Some were just disturbing - the one where the aligator ate the kid, and the teacher that gets hooked on drugs - couldn't stop reading but it was with a cringe on my face. And, I liked Tooth and Claw, the story of a man winning a serval in a bar, but I didn't love it like many reviewers - probably because I am a hopeless sap when it comes to animals and I didn't like the ending for the serval. . .

I became a Boyle fan after reading *Drop City*, one of my all-time favorite books. I continue reading Boyle and am usually slightly disappointed - they're good, but they're not great, like my favorite. This collection of short stories fared very well, and I'll recommend this book to others.

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## Andreas Schicha says

Teilweise schwächer Abklatsch von Bukowski

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## Bookmarks Magazine says

Boyle\_\_beloved author of *The Inner Circle* and *Drop City*\_\_is a masterful prose stylist. This volume showcases his skill, hurling such wonderful phrases as "face that was like a dried-up field plowed in both directions" at the reader. But the reviews of this collection were mixed, suggesting that Boyle is a bit too enamored of his own wordsmithing. A few critics claimed that he was so busy making it rococo and perfect that he failed to develop characters that readers care about. Still, the collection is clever, creative, and

inventive in the dialectic it poses between nature and civilization and will engage and even delight all but the most finicky readers.

This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

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### **Liz says**

It's more TC Boyle! I love this guy, especially his short stories. The highlight here is probably "Dogology" and the lowlight is that super long and boring story about a woman's travel from Boston to New York, in 1702. The title is almost as long as some of the other stories in the book. Seriously, the only pleasure I got from reading that story was when they went through Rhode Island and talked about places I know. But since it's 300 years ago, I don't really care.

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### **Frederick Bingham says**

A book of short stories by T. C. Boyle, read by the author. The title story is about a man who obtains a caged serval in a bar bet. The creature turns out to be nasty and dangerous. However, it does give him the in with a nice looking woman who is a waitress at the bar. "Up Against the Wall" is a (semi-autobiographical) story about a young man, living with his parents in the 60's who comes to start hanging out, doing drugs and getting into trouble. His parents marital discord and the Vietnam war hang over his head while all this is going on. "Dogology" is about a woman who turns to spending her days with packs of wild dogs because she cannot stand being around humans. "Jubilation", one of the best stories, is about a man who goes to live in a town called Jubilation. This is a town carved out of the Florida swamps by a Disney-like company trying to turn it into the american new urbanist dream. It turns out that the town has sinister undercurrents, for which the alligators that inhabit the lake are a metaphor. Another story, whose name I do not remember, is about a journey from Boston to New York, taken by a woman in 1702. Boyle is an amazingly versatile writer with a far-reaching mind. He is great at narrating his own work too. The CD includes an interesting interview with the author at the end.

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### **C.A. Lear says**

Ah what the heck, 4.5 stars rounded up. Here's a wonderful collection of well written and entertaining literary fiction. It's difficult to rate a collection because not all the stories are usually to my liking, but most of these were and all of them contained those magnificent prose Boyle is known for. I loved TOOTH AND CLAW, DOGOLOGY, THE SWIFT PASSAGE OF THE ANIMALS. I'm sure to reread this.

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### **Evinrude says**

Maybe two stars is a little harsh: Boyle certainly knows how to write, and I'm sure the stories will appeal to many readers, but I reached my quota of stories about lads with a drug/alcohol problems, and a crash on a

girl who is just not so into them.

A few stories stood out, and made the book worth reading (for me): the title story, Tooth and Claw, Dogology, and Chicxulub.

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### **DeMisty D. says**

Boyle gets in close in these stories, using only a handful of characters (two or three, usually) per piece, so nothing feels crowded. He looks at alcoholism, love relationships, and parenthood. His style and subject matter is reminiscent of Raymond Carver's, though Boyle lets the narration tell his tales, where Carver relies more on dialog. Still, it is clear that Boyle has read Carver well.

“Dogology” breaks away from the subject matter of most of the stories, a chronicle of a woman who is studying dogs by immersion and about two unrelated girls being raised by wolves in India. In some ways, “Chicxulub” seems to veer from the common themes, too, but there is a feeling of loss and personal struggle as in the others. The first person voice in stories such as “When I Woke Up This Morning, Everything I Had Was Gone” and “The Swift Passage of the Animals” makes the “I” character in both more honest in his failures.

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