



## Little Black Book of Stories

By A. S. Byatt

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Like Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm, Isak Dinesen and Angela Carter, A. S. Byatt knows that fairy tales are for grownups. And in this ravishing collection she breathes new life into the form.

**Little Black Book of Stories** offers shivers along with magical thrills. Leaves rustle underfoot in a dark wood: two middle-aged women, childhood friends reunited by chance, venture into a dark forest where once, many years before, they saw—or thought they saw—something unspeakable. Another woman, recently bereaved, finds herself slowly but surely turning into stone. A coolly rational ob-gyn has his world pushed off-axis by a waiflike art student with her own ideas about the uses of the body. Spellbinding, witty, lovely, terrifying, the **Little Black Book of Stories** is Byatt at the height of her craft.

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## Little Black Book of Stories By A. S. Byatt Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

From secret agonies to improper desires and the unthinkable, this slyly titled collection touches on more than a little bit of darkness. Booker Prize-winning author Byatt (*Possession*) masterfully fuses fantasy with realism in several of these stories, packing a punch with her sometimes witty, sometimes horrifying examinations of faith, art and memory. In the stunning "The Thing in the Wood," two young girls, Penny and Primrose, sent to the countryside during the WWII London blitz, confront the unconscious come to life as a monster ("its expression was neither wrath nor greed, but pure misery.... It was made of rank meat, and decaying vegetation"). They return in middle age to face the Thing again, but Penny, a psychotherapist, doesn't fare as well as Primrose, a children's storyteller. A lapsed Catholic gynecologist tries to rescue a starving artist in "Body Art," enacting what Byatt casts as the very obstructiveness of the Church he left behind. It's a chilling story that shines with grace. Byatt's modern-day fairy tale, "A Stone Woman," details a woman's metamorphosis from flesh to stone, which is both terrible and redemptive ("Jagged flakes of silica and nodes of basalt pushed her breasts upward and flourished under the fall of flesh"). In "Raw Material," a creative writing teacher finds inspiration in the work of an elderly student who comes to a gruesome end, the student's life and death imitating bad art very unlike her own. The haunting final story of the collection, "The Pink Ribbon," about a man who is more troubled by remembering than by forgetting as he cares for his Alzheimer's-addled wife, turns on the appearance of the ghost of the wife's former self. With an accomplished balance of quotidian detail and eloquent flights of imagination, Byatt has crafted a powerful new collection.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Byatt's readers fall into two camps. Some find her enthusiasm for minutiae in these Gothic tales infuriating—not everyone wants to read an extended description of the proper treatment of stoves. These detractors find this collection too smart for its own good, its many facts and metafictional digressions obstructing real emotion. Most readers, however, fell under Byatt's spell. For all her book-learning, many agree that Byatt can spin a story that's captivatingly scary—and perhaps more. Several praised these stories—"A Stone Woman" and "Body Art" in particular—as funny, poignant, and even uplifting. Byatt, award-winning author of *Possession*, may be only too willing to show off her knowledge of a variety of subjects. But for many, this knowledge only adds to her power.

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From [Booklist](#)

Byatt is commanding. Her prose is crisp and astringent. Her insights are lacerating, her approach sly, her visions searing, her wit honed, and her imagination peripatetic and larcenous, feasting on art, myth, fairy tales, and science. While her novels, including the brilliant *A Whistling Woman* (2002) and the Booker Prize-winning *Possession* (1990), are complex and powerful, her short stories are dazzling concentrates. As in her earlier collections, *The Matisse Stories* (1995), *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye* (1997), and *Elementals* (1999), Byatt creates, in her newest set of gems, a palimpsest of art and life as she examines how each shapes the other, and how trauma, be it personal or the mass psychosis of war, irrevocably transforms personalities and lives. In several galvanizing and highly original tales, including "Body Art," in which a gynecologist reluctantly gets involved with an angry young artist, she postulates deeply intriguing conflicts over the sacredness and profanity of the body and the vulnerability of the mind. And once again, Byatt proves herself to be the queen of fractured fairy tales. In "The Thing in the Woods," two young girls evacuated from

London at the start of World War II see something loathsome in the forest, a grotesque embodiment of evil, while "A Stone Woman" stands as a gloriously beautiful evocation of grief and metamorphosis. *Donna Seaman*  
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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Lou Marshall:**

In this 21st century, people become competitive in every way. By being competitive today, people have to do something to make these people survive, being in the middle of typically the crowded place and notice through surrounding. One thing that oftentimes many people have underestimated the item for a while is reading. That's why, by reading an e-book your ability to survive increases then having a chance to stand that other is high. For you who want to start reading a new book, we give you this Little Black Book of Stories book as a beginner and daily reading reserve. Why, because this book is usually more than just a book.

#### **Eldon Hall:**

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#### **Tracy Laflamme:**

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#### **Mathew Munz:**

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