



Larry Hochwald

A collection of stories

Not From Around Here

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"Sometimes things go better than you think, and sometimes they go worse. But they never go the way you expect." ---Alan Trente

Walk into a world where very real people find themselves in unreal situations, and witness: a young man is sitting in a salon getting his haircut, when he sees someone waving to him in the mirror. He looks around and realizes...the man waving is not in the room..... A college student meets a beautiful girl that wants to fulfill all his fantasies, but first he must join her club, and the initiation...is a horror. A man reaches out to his mother, he tries to connect, but she's just not the same anymore. One man's life is in a shambles until a little boy with a special gift reminds him of healing power of friendship. Aliens plan a tryst in a lovely mountain setting, but can Earth stand the bliss? A doctor stumbles upon a world-wide conspiracy, but his murder leaves it in the hands of his close friend to get the secret to the government. An African curse threatens to end a family's bloodline, but the ancient horror, once unleashed, won't stop there.... From meeting yourself walking down the street to surviving a homicidal groundhog, you'll go places and meet people that are more familiar than you might expect. You'll go on 18 journeys filled with excitement, suspense and laughter. And it all comes together when you get to know Alan Trente...he's...Not From Around Here.

Not From Around Here Details

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From Reader Review Not From Around Here for online ebook

Mary S. says

“Not From Around Here,” by Larry Hochwald is a collection of fiction that spans horror, fantasy, humor, literary, contemporary and science fiction genres. However, it is more than just a collection of exciting and surprising stories. There are several threads and themes that run throughout and, without providing a spoiler, I can tell you that it all comes together.

It starts, innocently enough, with a story called “Best Friend”. By the end of that story I was hooked. I was surprised by what happened, but also by my reaction. I was crying at the end of the story, and that was to happen 3 more times while I read the book.

Now, I read short stories and I love good ones, but I’m not a big fan of collections in general. Why? There are two reasons for this, though I am very pleased to say that Not From Around Here avoids both pitfalls. One reason I skip short stories collections is when they are filled with stories that are only slice of life. You come into a scene, you live it, and then you leave, without anything finishing. Thankfully, all of these are satisfying and complete stories, more like mini-novels, in that they are complex tales with a beginning, middle and end.

The other reason I often avoid short fiction collections is, sometimes, I find the quality of the stories becomes inconsistent in the middle of the book. They start with their best, and try to end on a high note, but the middle feels like filler, as does a lot of the content on many a CD. Fortunately, this book hold up very well, it is well written throughout, with some of the most inventive, surprising and visual stories right in the middle of the book.

The second story, “The Placebo Effect” is one of the most gripping I have ever read and I found there are comments all across the internet from people who back this up. One commenter on reddit recommended the story saying, in effect, “I don’t even like to read but I loved this one!” This story is an action packed thriller with an ending I couldn’t predict. In fact, that’s a hallmark of most of these---“WOW” endings that you just can’t predict.

One of the most surprising stories was the 4th story, “Join the Club”, It’s a little like a “50 Shades meets The Shining”;not explicit though, but in mature theme. I have to tell you, I don’t find much writing truly scary, and almost no short stories ever rise to that occasion, but this may be the scariest story I have ever read!” It is hard for me to choose my favorite stories because I really enjoyed every one, there were no real disappointments. “Faker” was a twist I’ve never seen before. “Mirrors” was a very original vision turning the nature of some beliefs about the after-life upside down. “Revelation” had some remarkable twists and I’ve seen some readers have said they haven’t seen that caliber of surprise since “The Sixth Sense”, and I can’t disagree! “Wall” and “Desolation Lovers” were two visual stories that I think would make great movies, and, “Old Ways” could be anything from a great adventure movie to a series of novels. “Mother’s Nature” and “When this War Began” are two very special, touching and very effective stories. Some stories just flat out freaked me out, and I would list “OCD”, “Carpet Shock” and “The Group” in that category. “A Present For Mikey” was a very short horror story that I had the bad fortune of someone tapping me on the shoulder just at the climax. And “Almost Home” was one of those where I cried at the end.”

There are laughs in just about every story, many laughs in several of them, such as “Fur and Loathing” and, ironically, “Join the Club”. This book is like a roller coaster ride and for the pure fun and excitement factors, I can’t remember enjoying a book this much in quite a while!

Kandy Scaramuzzo says

This was a very intriguing and entertaining collection of stories. I would have to say my favorite of all the stories was "Faker". All the stories have twists and turns that keep the reader interested and enthralled with the possibility of what could happen next. The stories are loosely woven together to make the book flow. The caliber of stories and the way they were written remind me a lot of Rod Serling and his Night Gallery stories. If you read the bios of both authors you will see that they were both very independent and interesting characters. This shows through in the writing of Not From Around Here. If you want something to keep you on the edge of your chair, but entertain you with some humor also, this is the book for you. Well done, Larry Hochwald. I look forward to more stories from this most original author.

R_b_eblac says

This book packs a wallop!

This book is perfect for anyone! Well, perhaps not young children, but "Not From Around Here" by Larry Hochwald will tantalize all who read it. I especially love the fact that each short story -- love short stories -- is different and exciting. Larry's characters are so well throughout that they seem real, which is what all readers crave. This is a readers book!

Most of Larry's stories would be perfect for M. Night Shyamalan even the first story, Best Friends. I'd definitely pay to watch it!

Can't wait for this author's next book!

Carl LW says

I enjoyed this book.

Andi Houtsch says

Not From Around Here is a collection of 18 short stories ranging in genres from horror to paranormal to science fiction. Starting with "Best Friend" the book begins on slightly predictable note with an adult man pining for family meeting a ghost boy. This is the last point at which I thought that anything in this book was predictable, and for a variety of reasons.

Hochwald has a talent for storytelling, evidenced in the range of genres he collected herein. His ideas are imaginative and a great many of his outcomes/plot reveals I simply did not see coming. I enjoyed the first half of the book which comprises stories revolving more around horror and paranormal. I got a few chuckles from stories like "Fur and Loathing" and "Join the Club". However, the second half of the book made me feel mired in viscous sludge in trying to wade through his science fiction efforts. Once I hit "Faker" my enjoyment took a rapid downturn.

It was right around this time when I realized Hochwald loves the name Alan Trente. He uses it as the name

for his main characters in 9 of the 18 stories: "Best Friend"; "Join the Club"; "Faker"; "Mirrors"; "Desolation Lovers"; "When This War Began"; "Wall"; "Revelation"; and "Not From Around Here". Considering the wide variety of stories he imagines and tells this overuse of the name strikes me as hackneyed and entirely unoriginal. It would be one thing if each Alan Trente was written as an entirely unique person but just as the name doesn't vary the personality attached to it doesn't either. After the first few stories like this I began to wonder if I wasn't actually reading a book about one rather boring guy who just happened to have a multitude of extraordinary things happen to him and have the same lifelong best friends: George, Richard and Stephen.

There are just a few individual stories that I was compelled to comment upon:

"Old Ways" read more as an overlong summary for an equally long epic Sci-Fi fantasy blended novel. Hochwald displays a penchant for more "telling" scads of back story than attention to character development and interaction. The overload of this information via dialog grew tiresome quickly and I found myself repressing the urge to scroll past this story to start the next. I stuck with it for integrity's sake, digesting the full story (31 pages) with wide eyed exasperation as the pages just continued to scroll by without the story ever getting any better. The plot does pick up with action toward the end but after so much convoluted back story serving to dull my interest I couldn't actively engage in it.

I didn't understand the point of the inclusion of "When This War Began" except as space/page filler. The author states twice in this 3 page "story" that this isn't a science fiction story but a metaphor. To me it appears as only another way to re-use the names Alan Trente and Richard, his best friend.

I was most intrigued by the ideas in "Wall" and went off on an abstract bunny trailing for awhile which is always fun but Hochwald's style doesn't do justice to his ideas.

Hochwald's style in his science fiction stories appears to be more focused on expounding upon details (convoluted back-story, super science-rich hypothesizing, etc) through long paragraphs of information-rich dialog than in actually telling a story. The author "tells" more than he shows and in such a way as to eventually achieve that dreaded "glazing over of the eyes and fogging of the brain" when too much information is given in a manner that is informative rather than engaging through character description, development, physical interaction and so on. They read so much more like dumbed-down yet somehow gloriously overcomplicated dialogic explanations on the depths of his scientific knowledge, daydreaming and readings rather than composing stories that reach out and snag the reader through action, character development and interaction. There is simply too much science in his science fiction and not enough of a human element so as to make them relatable and engaging. I found myself reading them not so much out of curiosity or concern for the characters and what happens to them but from a place of "I hope the next story makes me feel something for the people he's creating and putting through all these strange plot twists". As a reader I want to see events unfold rather than be led through them by the hand like some grade school child. I want to connect with the characters and be pulled at emotionally. Hochwald failed to kindle my true interest due to these shortfalls.

Hochwald is cautioned to remember to provide that necessary balance between humanistic feeling and relation over the inundation of the science necessary to compose a science fiction narrative. Without characters to evoke our emotional connections science fiction is merely a collection of scientific facts, theories and fantasies that leave the reader feeling bored and regretting the time invested in reading the book. Give us less science, more descriptive imagery, more definition and depth of characters. If you can't give us less science, find a way for your characters to show us their story as it unfolds rather than feeding us a ceaseless stream of point to point narration.

Hochwald would do well to have an editor review his manuscript in great detail. The editing misses were numerous for misplaced or unnecessary punctuation, and if commas could provide sustenance Hochwald gives nourishment in plenty here. The editing misses that I spotted are as follows:

Page 44:

“Alan decided he would have to charge down the steps, knock that grotesque walking pile of bones down, and get passed it, if he were going to get out of this.” (past, not passed)

Page 46:

“Alan opened his eyes and saw Jessica looking down at him, so beautiful, bathed in sunlight —it was morning.” (no quotations needed as this is not dialog)

Page 48:

She gave him a shy little smile. (italicized, unnecessary – not a train of thought)

Page 52:

“Finally his grandfather spoke. (misplaced quotation)

Page 58:

A slight smile crossed Ishii’s slips. I am quite sure you are not evil, yet I am also quite sure you have done something bad....” (missing starting quote for dialog)

Page 59:

“You’re prisoners? You don’t seem so bad. None of you do.” I said looking around me.”; At first I think it was a false laugh to mock what he had said, but I could not stop, I was laughing so hard.”(misplaced quotations)

Page 70:

They went inside, and came out a few minutes later. (extra spacing)

Page 78:

Alan wondered, “how do we get passed this thing?” (past, not passed)

Page 98:

In her exploration, their mother came across a remarkable people: the Hutuu. (mispelling of Huutu)

Page 99:

“It’s nothing to look at yet, but soon it will be a grand temple to my great presence,’ Tril’anga said in perfect English. Though the tribe spoke a dialect of an old language, their mother was able to understand and converse fluently. P’kutuh, the shaman, however, was able to speak freely in English and their mother was sure someone must have made contact before she did. P’kutuh assured her he was granted the ‘gift of tongues’ by the old ones, and that was how he did this. ‘Yes,’ Tril’anga said, ‘I have the gift of tongues.’ (This section is italicized and is previously explained as a diary entry the main characters are reading, written from their mother’s point of view. However, at this juncture the tense changes from a retelling from their mother to a third person accounting yet the text remains italicized).

Page 101:

Flames burst out all around them: colored flames, green, blue, red, it would have been beautiful if it weren’t deadly.” (needs a semicolon after red; misplaced quotation – no dialog).

Page 111:

“From what I understood we should put it high up on the outside. The men went outside the tent and Scott pushed on the side of the tent to bring it down, so Robert could better access the top. (missing end quotation after “on the outside.”)

Page 112:

“Maybe, but we can’t know for sure until we know what’s going on. Kah’lar gave us the amulet also and said it was the most powerful protection. It was for the one going back home to face Tril’anga — so you have it. Either the Huutu magic is working or it isn’t, but I don’t think it would be any more dangerous to take a look at what is going on out there. They moved closer to the front flap. Robert touched the amulet he wore under his shirt. (missing end quotation after “what is going on out there.”)

Page 130:

“They’ve infected me with the virus. I’m in bad shape. At first, I feared it would be a long and painful process, but now it seems it might go more quickly than even I might have hoped. (missing end quotation; next line in text opens new dialog from a different speaker)

Page 137:

Smoothly and quietly it accelerated while the artificial gravity and dampening system kept the G-forces from becoming uncomfortable.” (misplaced end quotation; no dialog)

Page 162:

Now I would need to probe their weaknesses with the computer, in a way that would give me sufficient information and, not arouse suspicion. Just then, a wall lit up and Mr. Archer was on a large screen. (This section is italicized as protagonist’s stream of thought. The last sentence in this paragraph is not stream of thought but description of a change in environs and therefore should be separated into its own line and not italicized)

There were also a few formatting issues of note:

Desolation Lovers: There appears to be a spacing issue for the text: in some places it appears to be single spaced, in others 1.5, and strewn throughout the text are large gaps of open white space between paragraphs, which usually indicate a scene-change but in this case it appears to be an editing/formatting issue.

Almost Home:

The tense changes at: I keep eyeing the clock. I have to steel my nerves for what I have already put off too long ; the call home. I must accept that I’m late and call to check in.

The phone rang four times before Laura picked up. I was greeted by a tentative, “Hello”.

(The text continues on in 3rd tense from there).

In conclusion: Hochwald infallibly delivers a unique twist in his plots that often made me chuckle; others made me wince, deeply. He delivers on his promise to deliver thought provoking stories but is thankfully vague about what kind of thoughts he, his stories and writing style will invoke. Where others appear to have greatly enjoyed this collection I’m afraid I am left wanting and unimpressed.

Rk_bookman says

I loved this book and the way the words come together so well! If you took Raymond Carver, Isaac Asimov, and Woody Allen, and blended them together you'd come up with the short stories of Larry Hochwald. It's like you're going through an enchanting maze and with each discovery of a new passage you are enlightened and filled with amazement.

Richard My says

(100%)

I'm finished with Not From Around Here: I loved 15 stories, liked 1 a lot (Revelation) but that was a long story and think it could've appeared in a different spot. The book has a lot of momentum at the beginning, settles into a nice pace in the middle, but Revelation is a cerebral sci-fi thinker near the end that I liked but slows down the pace before the next two pick it up big time! I thought 2 stories were just okay (When This War Began and The Group). This book was a quick read for me but I wasn't used to reading short stories so each time I finished I could see putting it down because you feel like you just finished something. But since I was enjoying the stories so much I just kept going on to the next.

Lu H says

An extremely brilliant writer! I am becoming addicted to his creative mind. I wish I could rate this fifty stars instead of five. I am grateful for discovering this book. The first story was engaging and emotional and from there it was like a wild ride. The second story, Placebo Effect was so exciting and original. There are horror stories in here that made me laugh when they weren't scaring me. And I didn't think I was a big science fiction fan but the story WALL was so great and so thoughtful it makes me think otherwise.

L.A. says

Have you ever looked in a mirror and wondered what was behind the reflection? How about meeting someone for the first time and realizing you will be lifelong friends? With an influx of bizarre tales and strange phenomena many stories of the unusual tend to crop up.

In Not From Around Here by Larry Hochwald, you are treated to a collection of 18 just such stories. The amazing a bizarre happenstance keeps you going as each creates and indelible mark in your thoughts. Can such things truly happen? There are times when a short story is all you need. This is a fine material for waiting for your kids at the school, or even waiting at the Dentist or Doctors office, you don't have to worry about not being able to get back to the ending.

Each story is unique, and in cases just a bit creepy. In some there is a thread of humor that keeps you chuckling, as you move to the next. Some contain morals that make you think while others are just on the

verge of the impossible, but with just a question mark of ‘what if?’

Hochwald does a great job of building his protagonists with believable characteristics, as well as making them memorable. Each story has a unique and solid character in which you find the interactions to be stimulating and at times amusing. Then he takes his setting and either makes them dreamlike, or creepy, or just out of this world. Yet his descriptions are able to draw a picture that is often difficult with short stories.

If you are looking for a fun gift for that hard to please friend for Christmas, this might be a great direction to take. If you enjoy a bit of fun as well as the unbelievable you will enjoy Hochwald's zany imagination. A unique point of view, and shared with verve.

Ben Willen says

I was very happy to find this book. It was recommended to me and I've read a lot of classics and a lot of the most well known books and I'm always looking for new stories, but the new books and less known authors often leave me wanting. This collection was very well done and I loved the range of stories. What tied them together, more than the underlying plot line, is that they are all well written, surprising and amazingly original. This was an exciting, suspenseful, scary, funny, thought-provoking collection.

I look forward to more from this author.

Pajomh says

Don't miss out on this book!

“Not From Around Here” by Larry Hochwald is a must read! It’s a real “page-turner”. I couldn’t wait to start the next story. You will think you found lost episodes of “The Twilight Zone” in some cases. Even if you aren’t a fan of Science Fiction, the stories are so good and well written, you’ll love them anyway. The stories are just enough to stretch the imagination—and some, just make you think or wonder. His writing style is easy and comfortable to follow with virtually no profanity, which I found very refreshing. Then, at the end, you’ll see how the stories are all connected. I highly recommend this book to intelligent adults everywhere! I’d like to see more from this author!

Kelly W says

I haven't read a book of short stories for ages and was happy to receive my copy from Goodreads. I very much enjoyed Not From Around Here. Some of the stories made me laugh out loud, some made me cry and several of them raised the hairs on the back of my neck. Larry Hochwald can really tell a story ! I identified with some of his characters that took me back to a long-ago childhood.

I "figured out" some of his stories before I finished them, but it didn't spoil them at all. Most of his tales completely sideswiped me. I hope he continues to write. I'd certainly buy another book of short stories he's written.

Lucas P says

I love this book. Throughout all eighteen stories I was consistently enthralled, and then shocked by the endings. There are very few things left in life that are totally original- but this book is one of them! The stories are at times spooky.sometimes funny but always engaging. while being a very easy read. I found the book diverse. which helped to maintain my interest and made me eager to read the twist in the next story. It was extremely creative, well written and clever and as I finished the book the one thought that came to mind was BRAVO!

Rebecca Black says

Hello M.Night Shyamalan, great stories are waiting for you in Larry Hochwald's book, Not From Around Here. I truly expect to see at least one of Larry's stories on the big screen. Each of his short stories grabs the reader in a very personal way. Some of the stories, I felt I was there with the characters. All, I didn't want to end.

I enjoyed this book of short stories and highly recommend it to all my friends.

Kelly says

I usually don't read books of short stories but I received this free from a Goodreads giveaway.

I gave it 4 stars because some of the stories were every bit 5 star worthy, others were barely 3 stars so I went for the average. I almost gave up reading after the first few stories. I thought the dialogue was predictable and the stories seemed to jump over some parts where the plot should have been worked out more. But then I got to "Join the Club" and got sucked in. It was a great horror story!

So while there were some stories I thought were not worth my time, others were really good and left me wanting more. I thought the plot of Faker was excellent and kept you guessing on the grandfather. I loved Old Ways, could not stop reading that one. Mother's Nature was not one of my favorite stories but it had my favorite line in the book "rather than just move through life, we randomly bounce around it." Love that :) You may not be crazy about each and every story, but it would be a shame to skip the whole book and miss the stories that were really entertaining.
