



# The People on Privilege Hill

*Jane Gardam*

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Jane Gardam's delightful short stories range from the Lake District to Dorset; from Wimbledon, where an old Victorian mansion has been converted into a home for unmarried mothers, to wartime London, where a hospital is the scene of a job interview in the middle of the Blitz. In 'Pangbourne' (not, in this instance, the place, but the name of an ape), a lonely woman allows herself tenderly to fall in love with a gorilla; 'Snap' is about a loveless one-night stand - and its ironic punishment. Two of the stories are ghost stories; and fans of Gardam's most recent novel, the bestselling *Old Filth*, will be overjoyed to encounter Filth himself and his ancient enemy and sparring partner, Veneering, among the umbrellas at a luncheon party on a soaking wet day.

Jane Gardam is a writer at the height of her powers, well-known for her caustic wit, free-wheeling imagination, love of humanity and wicked powers of observation - as well as the hint of the bizarre and the surreal that she brings to her fiction. Her new collection of short stories is a delicious treat.

## The People on Privilege Hill Details

Date : Published November 1st 2007 by Chatto & Windus

ISBN : 9780701177997

Author : Jane Gardam

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## From Reader Review The People on Privilege Hill for online ebook

### Carol says

I had held off on this book, because it was the last bit of writing about the characters from Old Filth, etc., that I hadn't read; I wanted to keep something in reserve. The first story has Veneering, Feathers, and Fiscal-Smith, and it was even better than I had hoped. In the few-ish pages of the story, Gardam gives a lovely sketch of these characters, with a bit of longed-for extra information about Veneering. Very satisfying. All of the stories are wonderful, sympathetic, empathetic, forgiving, and well written. I'm looking forward to re-reading it someday.

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### Jeanette says

These are quite different from her trilogy on Edward Feathers, Old Filth and his bunch. IMHO, 4 stars is a generous rating for this short story group. But do take that with a grain of salt because I am not a fan of short stories- yet I love novellas. Despite that, even in such tiny crisp exercises, the characterizations are excellent.

Regardless, Jane Gardam tackles some social issues here in context of the 1960's and 1970's that are done in present tense narrative BUT, IMHO, would be highly "suspect" to the PC police of 2012, 2013, 2014. For instance, I appreciated the unwed Mother story and think I understood it, but others might not at all. Or be appalled at such strong sensibilities of consequence in all these second half of the 20th Century stories.

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### Frandy says

Wonderful collection of short stories by the impeccable Jane Gardam.

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### Bettie? says

Description: *Jane Gardam's delightful short stories range from the Lake District to Dorset; from Wimbledon, where an old Victorian mansion has been converted into a home for unmarried mothers, to wartime London, where a hospital is the scene of a job interview in the middle of the Blitz. In 'Pangbourne' (not, in this instance, the place, but the name of an ape), a lonely woman allows herself tenderly to fall in love with a gorilla; 'Snap' is about a loveless one-night stand - and its ironic punishment. Two of the stories are ghost stories; and fans of Gardam's most recent novel, the bestselling Old Filth, will be overjoyed to encounter Filth himself and his ancient enemy and sparring partner, Veneering, among the umbrellas at a luncheon party on a soaking wet day.*

The People on Privilege Hill

Pangbourne

Babette

The Latter Days of Mr Jones

The Flight Path

The Milly Ming  
The Hair of the Dog  
Dangers  
Waiting for a Stranger  
Learning to Fly  
The Virgins of Bruges  
The Fledgling  
Snap  
The Last Reunion

The author of the Old Filth trilogy explains why, despite her award-winning career as a novelist, it's short stories she loves best

4\* Old Filth  
5\* The Man in the Wooden Hat  
WL Last Friends  
WL Crusoe's Daughters  
3\* Bilgewater  
TR The People on Privilege Hill  
4\* The Stories

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## Leselaunen says

Die Leute von Privilege Hill ist das erste Buch von Jane Gardam, welches ich lese. Die Autorin sagte mir natürlich etwas, jedoch konnte ich, was ihren Schreibstil und ihre Geschichten anging, nicht mitreden. Das hat sich zumindest ein stückweit geändert. Bei diesem Buch handelt es sich um Erzählungen. Um kurze Geschichten. Sechzehn an der Zahl. Bisher haben mich Kurzgeschichten nicht angesprochen. Warum sich das änderte, das möchte ich folgend darlegen.

### Hanser-Verlag zum Buch

Dass Jane Gardam hinreißende Romane schreibt, ist bekannt. Nun ist ein weiterer Schatz zuheben: Gardams Erzählungen, für die sie berühmt ist und mit Alice Munro und Katherine Mansfield verglichen wird. Hetty, die Familienmutter, die bei der Begegnung mit ihrem ehemaligen Liebhaber in einen somnambulen Zustand gerät. Annie, die Schriftstellerin, die sich gegen Neugier und Gier entscheidet und ein Geheimnis dem Meer übergibt. Der verstummte chinesische Junge, der in England einen vom Himmel gestürzten Schwan rettet und plötzlich zur Sprache zurückfindet. Sie alle berühren uns und entwickeln ein Eigenleben, das über die Geschichten hinausgeht – in jeder dieser Erzählungen steckt die Verheißung eines Romans.

Das Cover fand ich zunächst wenig spektakulär. Als ich das Buch aber in den Händen hielt, gefiel es mir schon viel besser. Das Hardcover mit Schutzumschlag ist sehr schön anzusehen und ich mag die typische Schriftart der Gardam-Bücher. In die erste Geschichte bin ich ziemlich schnell hinein gekommen. Dennoch war ich noch unsicher, ob mir ein Buch voller Erzählungen zusagen könnte.

Aber schon sehr schnell wurde mir klar, dass Gardam nicht ganz umsonst wegen ihrer Schreibweise in den Köpfen der Leser bleibt. Ihre Formulierungen sind gespickt von Hämen gegenüber der Spezies Mensch.

Allerdings nie so, dass ich die Lust am Lesen verlor. Viel mehr fand ich diesen Umstand erheiternd. Das Interesse und die Faszination an ihren Mitmenschen, bzw. ihren Figuren ist immer spürbar.

Die Charaktere in den sechzehn Geschichten im Buch bekommen von der Autorin viel Leben eingehaucht und wirken authentisch. Einige Male musste ich schmunzeln, war oft amüsiert und angetan von der literarischen Kunst, die Gardam in jede ihrer Erzählungen einfließen lässt. Ich habe mir bewusst viel Zeit für das Buch genommen und die einzelnen Geschichten auf mich wirken lassen.

Obwohl Kurzgeschichten normalerweise gar nicht mein Metier sind, hat mich Die Leute von Privilege Hill dafür etwas mehr begeistern können. Und sicherlich bleibt das nicht das letzte Buch von Jane Gardam, welches ich lese.

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### **Lady Drinkwell says**

I loved everything single one of these magical, moving or twist in the tale stories. Just a delight!

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### **Trish says**

The People on Privilege Hill contains stories, short and quick and with adult emotions. Gardam has a laser-eye, and can have a razor-tongue, but she knows what humans are and what makes a story.

In "**The Fledgling**," we are introduced to that self-conscious teen ready to leave the nest, and the mixed emotions of parent and child are recognizable and painful and funny at the same time. In "**Dangers**" we encounter a story reminiscent of the UK's BBC radio show *My Word*, where segments often feature a funny and circuitous word etymology. "**Waiting for a Stranger**" may be my favorite of all, as an uncertain hostess waits for an overseas guest to arrive at her remote farm cottage. There had been only a day to prepare--it was a sudden request from her minister and her guest is a black African bishop. She is a farm wife and mother, and she'd never seen a black man in the flesh before, just on the telly. There is something terribly poignant about the care for a stranger.

In "**The Virgin of Bruges**," Gardam displays her trademark dry wit:

But even if she had not wanted me I would have gone to her. Frédérique is unlike me. She is a mother, wife of a farmer, beautiful, resourceful, practical, intellectual. I am a small, short man.

"Pangbourne" is a story of cherishing another being, sharing their space, and their life, with no expectation of any return. And Gardam breaks our hearts with "**The Latter Days of Mr. Jones**," the story of an elderly man, alone and never married, accused of hateful crimes against children. Each story illuminates corners of the human psyche and doesn't bore us with too much of anything—explanations or asides, regrets or remarks. Just short stories that remain long in one's memory.

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## **David says**

I first discovered Jane Gardam a few years ago when I read her subtle, completely brilliant, account of the life of English barrister Eddie Feathers, aka "Old Filth" ('failed in London, try Hong Kong'). Ms Gardam upped the ante late last year by publishing a companion volume, "The Man in the Wooden Hat", which retold, and deepened, the story of the Feathers marriage from the point of view of his wife Betty.

Old Filth and his nemesis Veneering make a cameo appearance in the first story in this awesome collection by Gardam. It's impossible for me to pinpoint exactly where her brilliance lies. I'll just say that no collection of stories has moved me as much in the past five years and leave it at that. The stories are all over the map - from a woman who falls in love with a gorilla to the unexpectedly moving account of a college reunion - each has a wit and poignancy that few authors can match.

You have to read these stories - they will surprise and delight you. A truly spectacular accomplishment from an author you may not have come across. It's for books like this one that I created my "unexpectedly terrific" shelf.

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## **William Koon says**

I pause to give thanks to those who have guided me along the way. One was ex-student Charlie who right after he was expelled brought by a copy of "Cat's Cradle," and said, "I think you will enjoy Vonnegut. I did –and do. Another was Nicole who introduced me to Jane Gardam. Along the way I got to know one of the more remarkable characters (and his environs) in contemporary fiction, Gardam's "Old Filth."

Now, here is a wonderful selection of her stories, the first of which finds us back with "Old Filth" as he approaches ninety in a rain storm. Joyous. She takes us other places, too. Here's a telling story about charity, and unwed mothers, and how we have all changed. Another is an enchanting piece about a woman who is in love with an ape, and whose love –seemingly-- is shared. I particularly am struck by how responsive Gardam is to the aged in society.

Throughout the collection there is not a false note. Not one word used that is not needed. No idea that needs to be added. My only wish is that this slim volume had been a fatter serving of Gardam's considered and true prose which hides beneath it worlds of delight and art.

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## **Jennifer Shepard says**

3.5, not Gardam's strongest stories, though I did, as always, enjoy spending the time with her writing.

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## **Paul Fulcher says**

Some nice colour, particularly of Wimbledon of a certain vintage, and as someone who lives there I can see the transformation of the area she describes.

But many of the stories seemed more like observation pieces and didn't really go anywhere.

Much weaker for my taste than the Old Filth novels.

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### **Mike says**

Collection of short stories in typical Jane Gardam style. Very readable.

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### **Eleanor says**

I love Jane Gardam's writing - it is spare, elegant and full of insight into the quirks of human nature. This is a book of short stories and what a wonderful collection they are.

The first, which gives the book its title, is about Edward Feathers (Old Filth) and his acquaintances. There are ghost stories, compassionate stories of old and lonely people, and one set in London in the middle of the Blitz.

My runaway favourite is about a woman who is tempted into a one night stand up in the Lake District while her husband is absent from home, but has to take the dog (a Black Labrador) with her because there isn't anyone she can ask to mind it. There is a wonderful absurdity to this. We have a Black Lab and I suspect that Jane Gardam has one too - the dog's behaviour is spot on and the results are hilarious.

Highly recommended.

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### **Deanna says**

3.5 stars. Didn't realize this was a book of short stories, very loosely connected to the Old Filth series.

Gardam is a stellar storyteller, though I prefer her novels. I found the short stories ranging from delightful to tedious, with most in the middle of the range.

I believe most of my disappointment was that I wasn't in much of a short story frame of mind, and that I had recently read her series of Old Filth novels and was in the novel-length rhythm of her writing. I found it harder to stay tuned with her short fiction, and not because of poor writing.

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### **Lisa says**

A wonderful collection especially the first story which I really enjoyed. Gardam can be funny, wry, so intuitive. Her prose is lovely, her characters very endearing and beautifully written and I love the way she can integrate the everyday into such amazing tales...

