



Songbook for Haunted Boys and Girls

Wayne McNeill

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This “testament made of trees” is a sort of memoir told in short prose pieces or prose poems: the joys and terrors of childhood, the quirkiness of our teenage years, growing old; old friendships, old love affairs, old grudges; food and drink, music, the sweetness of conversation. It’s also a portrait of a neighborhood—one of shops and restaurants and pubs and patios. *Songbook for Haunted Boys and Girls* is a song you put on and listen to over wine, a book of encouragement. It’s a sturdy and unpretentious affirmation of life, expressed simply and exquisitely.

Songbook for Haunted Boys and Girls Details

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Author : Wayne McNeill

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From Reader Review Songbook for Haunted Boys and Girls for online ebook

Adam Tritt says

It is a rainy night—thunder, lightning, and the hush that seems to be left in the spaces between the drops. It is a night for reading, and there is a stack of books on the table next to me. Six books, all awaiting my attention. Which to read? I want something I can pick up and put down, stories that won't take long but will take hold. And so I choose Songbook for Haunted Boys and Girls.

In my chair, a glass of sherry next to me, and McNeill's book in my hands... then, a few pages in, the electricity goes out. I put the book down and light the always-ready summer-in-Florida hurricane lamp. Now all is dark and quiet, save for the lightning flash, thunderclap, and falling rain, and the soft brush of pages turning over pages.

From rural Florida and the storm season, I find myself in cosmopolitan Toronto, living on the Danforth, looking up at the cat in the window, sitting with a glass of wine, meeting the people who live on that street, and coming to know them as though they were neighbours longstanding and familiar. I am not living my own life, yet one comfortable and known.

In stories of less than a page, in beautiful lyric prose, each succinct yet sweet section leaves me wanting the next, leaves me feeling more at home in a world thickly detailed, densely real, and utterly magnetic. The words are perfumed; they ring, they reach for me, hold my hand, sit upon my tongue, and look deeply into my eyes.

The book comes to the last page, my sherry barely touched, the rain soft, the clock ticking now the morning hours, and all I can do is turn to the first story and start again. Let the lamp burn. I have reading to do.

E.J. says

I won this in a GR giveaway. :)

Now that that's out of the way...

I'm not sure how I feel about the overall collection:

there were ones I liked and others I didn't. I loved all of the ones involving Fanny or Mademoiselle Vague and the ones involving the Bookstore, but I was meh about quite a few others.

I would be more specific with titles, but after reading it, I decided to spread it around to my community by leaving it in a "Take a Book, Leave a Book" so that others may read it. :)

Thank you for giving me the chance to read it!

I would definitely suggest it to a few of my friends overall, but I would suggest one or more to most of my friends.

Cyndi says

A book to come back to over and over.

Lisa says

Wayne McNeill's writing is delicious.

Rose Boehm says

Last night I finished, sometimes laughing out loud, one of the most delicious books I've read in a while: the **SONGBOOK FOR HAUNTED BOYS AND GIRLS** by **Wayne McNeill**, published by Smithcraft Press (www.SmithCraftPress.com).

Since I am only a passionate reader and not a professional critic, I can't give you clever stuff about what the poet meant by what or why McNeill writes these poems in prose (well it's called prose because he doesn't give us line breaks). I don't even care what you call them.

The fact is that the book is magical. You can read it in installments, put it down (if you can) and pick it up again when you have a moment. More than likely you won't be able to stop once you started.

Reading the **SONGBOOK FOR HAUNTED BOYS AND GIRLS** I became a neighbour in a small community somewhere in Toronto, Canada, called 'the Danforth'. I lived in McNeill's head for the duration and met an assortment of oddball people and sat on park benches, perusing, musing. And 'living in McNeill's head' meant that I acquired a certain detachment, humanity, gentleness, a sense of the ridiculous and a sense of humour, as well as a deep love for Fanny who appears whenever she feels like it, as cats tend to do. I also met Mademoiselle Vague:

IN AN AIRPORT LOUNGE

I wrote a two-line poem on a napkin and slid it over. "Thank you, kind sir," said Mademoiselle Vague. "I like to have something to read on the plane."

His publisher said it to perfection, so I'll quote him, "Yet there's a lightness of touch about his writing. It's as quiet and unassuming as a summer rain. Old loves, old lusts, old books, young wine, a meal with friends. McNeill's pieces celebrate the simple, the quotidian, the sacredness of sunlight in the late afternoon."

You have to listen/read carefully or you miss it. All his poems are conversations with the 'God of small things'.

POET RISES

Poet rises from his sickbed and whispers to himself, "Beloved strip plaza, beloved car dealership, beloved parkette and library."

CRAVEN ARMS STATION, THE WELSH BORDERS

A railway track overgrown with grass, weeds, and wildflowers. Evidently, I'll be a little late.

BEAR

Bear wasn't a biker though he hung out with bikers and rode a Harley. In other words, he didn't belong to a club. When his 'old lady' gave him the boot, he walked into the Black Swan Tavern with his arms around a big potted plant. No, it wasn't marijuana, just a harmless, suburban houseplant. "Listen here," said Bear, "I want you to take care of this. Water it twice a week and spray the leaves once in a while."

HOMETOWNS

It's always raining when we visit our hometowns: a part of the charm I suppose, and the melancholy. And it being November, the leaves are off the trees and blown to the curbside. A sketchbook and a piece of charcoal is all one can say about it.

There are so many (in fact ALL of them, not one misses) that I have to stop. Do get this book, pour yourself your favourite comforter, curl up and enjoy. I haven't had so much fun reading in a long time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wayne McNeill was born, raised, and continues to live in Toronto, Ontario. His poems and short prose pieces first appeared in various Canadian magazines and periodicals as well as four chapbooks including *Angels Have No hearts* and *Lola*. His writing has also been represented in several anthologies, most recently *The Dominion of Love*. The Greek neighbourhood he calls home, widely known as the Danforth, has been a source of inspiration for over thirty years.

Monica says

*Won this on a Goodreads First reads Give-a-way on 7-16-2013** Can't wait to get it!!** Got it today "YAY!" 7-22-2013*

This book of prose-poems is I think a testament to the young and old. A book of poems of a person you know and of people you want to know. Oh and I can't forget about Fanny... she sounds like a wonderful friend. Wayne has had a life I wish I had.

Linda says

I have been reading Wayne McNeill's work for about seven years now, and I am a fan. This book is wonderful; filled with secret peeks into life on the Danforth (a neighbourhood in Toronto, Canada) and beyond.

These little slices of life are sweet, never bitter, always moving, often funny, and sometimes risqué. They stay with you - haunting in the very best sense - and always leave you wanting to know more.

Highly recommended.

(Available as ebook and "real" book).

Caroline says

I was fortunate to win a copy through Goodreads give aways. I love to read all types of poetry. This was a first for this type. I enjoyed the memories of Wayne McNeill. I also laughed out loud at times about how he expressed himself or about other times where he felt sorrow I cried for him. When his life companion Fanny cat assuming had passed away. How he had dug the grave in a flowerbed at the church, up to his elbows in dirt. With such a sorrowful time he chose a flowerbed, which normal is a place of beauty. What more could one ask for a loving companion. Thank you for sharing your memories.

Dona says

Let me tell you a secret. It is a very dark secret for me: Even though I used to devour several books a month, I've not actually finished a book all year. Until yesterday. Yesterday I began AND finished a book. The same book. At one sitting. Granted, it is a small book, but it is a book full of life, vibrant characters, amusing situations and delightful writing. That's not to say there is no sadness in the book – that's there too.

In Songbook for Haunted Boys and Girls, Wayne McNeill not only shows us his corner of the world through his eyes, he shows us humanity through the seasoned eyes of an honest person. He is a truth-teller who paints words with a clear softness. He writes about real people, blemishes and all, in such a way they are both clear to a reader, yet utterly beautiful. He writes about memories, wistful but by no means melancholy. He also writes about cats. That in itself is a reason to read this book.

My life is that much better for having read this book – a book I will go back to many more times. Each time I read it – or read selections from it – I will again feel as if I am sitting with Wayne at his apartment window or at a table at an outdoor café or the local “parkette” seeing what he sees through the filter of his magnanimous eyes.

Note: this is the same review I posted on Amazon)

Darla says

great story telling reminded me so much of campfire stories when I was younger
