



Homesick

Guy Vanderhaeghe

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It is the summer of 1959, and in a prairie town in Saskatchewan, Alec Monkman waits for his estranged daughter to come home, with the grandson he has never seen. But this is an uneasy reunion. Fiercely independent, Vera has been on her own since running away at nineteen – first to the army, and then to Toronto. Now, for the sake of her young son, she must swallow her pride and return home after seventeen years. As the story gradually unfolds, the past confronts the present in unexpected ways as the silence surrounding Vera's brother is finally shattered and the truth behind Vera's long absence revealed. With its tenderness, humour, and vivid evocation of character and place, *Homesick* confirms Guy Vanderhaeghe's reputation as one of Canada's most engaging and accomplished storytellers.

From the Hardcover edition.

Homesick Details

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Author : Guy Vanderhaeghe

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Debra says

Thirty-six-year-old Vera Miller doesn't want to return to her father's home in the small town of Connaught, Saskatchewan, but she feels there's little choice. As a single mother with a dead-end job and a twelve-year-old boy who's falling under negative influences, it's time to take action. The problem is that Vera's been angry with her father since before she left home seventeen years earlier, and her anger hasn't faded.

Homesick is a beautifully written story about a family who can't accept, or abide, one another's strongest traits, or flaws, as the case may be. There are secrets and memories that haunt Vera and her father Alec. Fences need to be mended, yet each cannot quite fully take that final step, and this makes the story riveting and painful.

I loved the fact that this isn't a story about horrible abuse or murder, yet judging from the level of Vera's anger I thought it might be in the opening chapters. Don't get me wrong, there are serious issues in a story dominated by obstinate personalities and misunderstandings. It's about how elusive forgiveness can be, and it's a great read.

Claire says

why did it take so long for me to find this treasure?

Ruthie says

A quiet moving book with deeply developed characters and relationships. For the reader much is left unsaid but all is conveyed. For the characters in the story, much is left unsaid and the results are often tragic. Wonderful descriptions of place and time. Excellent writing.

Vicki says

This novel's rendering of the attempts by an estranged father and daughter to establish a new relationship is straightforward, down to earth, unvarnished and very effecting because it never overtly pulls at the reader's heartstrings. The lives of the crusty but not uncaring father, the feisty daughter, her surprisingly but not unrealistically mature 12-year-old son and a dedicated and long-suffering family friend intertwine in emotionally resonant fashion.

Penny (Literary Hoarders) says

I knew this was a 5-star read probably 2 pages in. My first read of Vanderhaeghe, but Homesick has made certain it will now not be my last. Fantastic read.

Ellen says

This was a very easy read. Vanderhaeghe is a great story teller. Actually this book made me incredibly sad for a variety of reasons. The grandson-grandfather relationship was an interesting one. I felt all the characters were well fleshed out and the ending was satisfying, but I found the last 1/4 of the book so very very sad.

Carol Harrison says

Couldn't decide if I "really liked" or only "liked" this book--I was definitely caught up in it and usually read longer than planned whenever I picked it up. The 2 main characters, Alex and his daughter Vera, are both so stubborn you want to shake them, but during the course of the novel you do get some insight into why this is so. Still maybe just a bit overdone. I like the descriptions, and the different points of view, although at times near the end of the book this becomes a little confusing--for example suddenly one chapter is in the first person, which hasn't happened up till then. But generally a "good read"!

Geoff says

This wasn't his best book, and it likely won't stay with me for long. Heartfelt and enjoyable, and well worth the read, but it doesn't have the stylistic excellence or the punch of some of his more recent works. No regrets about this, but if I'm ranking it against his other books it just doesn't quite hold up.

Mmars says

I finished this several days ago and I'm still trying to decide if everything fit together. The story is largely set in Saskatchewan in 1959, with flashbacks to Vera's childhood and life after she left home at the age of seventeen. Now in her mid- to late-30s she has a 12-year-old son, Daniel, who she worries obsessively over because of negative big city influences. So she decides to return to her isolated hometown to live with her father. This takes a 56 hour bus ride. I'll think of that next time I have a long and cramped plane ride!

But here's the catch. Vera and her father Alec are both stubbornly and unreasonably headstrong and neither will back down and admit fault or apologize for their actions, words or decisions. This was true during her childhood and remains so after she returns with son in tow. This son turns out to be a good kid caught between his mother's expectations and a growing love for a grandfather who becomes his father figure. Right or wrong, Alec's anecdotes that guide Daniel on his way to manhood are highly entertaining. I felt Vera's tales were sometimes less successful, though still well told.

What ensues is a story of mistakes and broken down family communication. And this is the strength and core of the book. Readers who relish stories centered around family dynamics (Anne Tyler comes to mind) will find much to like in this book. There's humor and tears. A book that pulls at the heartstrings.

Carly Sbamvour says

There's nothing all that fascinating about the book; nothing exotic or particularly shocking. It's the story of a typical family situation where a single mother returns to her father's home, even though it's the last place she wants to be, but she knows it's the best thing for her young teenage son.

I like the way Vanderhaeghe weaves the tale - he gives a little backstory here and there so the reader understands just how the mother and son came to be where they're at.

There's a brother and a little mystery surrounding him. We do not know until the end of the book just where he got to.

It's the kind of story you can snuggle under the covers with and be sure it'll take you there.

Daniel Kukwa says

A beautiful, painful, occasionally raw look at people looking for love, but finding it almost impossible to express. This is both an exquisitely written story, and an example on how to use the past as more than just a golden dose of nostalgia. I was taken completely by surprise when this novel suddenly grabbed my soul and refused to let go...

Jennifer says

there were many moments in this book which i really enjoyed so much, but there were parts that just didn't come together for me. i was frustrated by the stubbornness and lack of communication going on between alec and vera (father and daughter in the novel). i get it. i do. people really are like this, and it's great to write around two characters like this. i suppose i just feel like more opportunities could have been taken to show more dimensions with alec and vera. they did have moments, and i liked when these were presented in the story. i have read vanderhaeghe before, and loved him. so perhaps my expectations were just too high going into this novel? please know i didn't dislike the book - i did like it. i just didn't love it.

Brahm says

Couldn't put this one down.

Jane Broadribb says

I have never gone wrong with Guy Vanderhaeghe. I always get what I expect. Fully developed characters living in a fully developed novel. Thanks Guy!!

Lbaker says

This was printed in 1982, and was one of Guy Vanderhaeghe's first books.

Set in Saskatchewan, a touching family drama in which everyone has secrets, every character is three dimensional, complex, evolving, touchingly real.

I had to hold myself in check - hurry through to see what was going to happen, or go slow and savour the story and keep it at it longer.

The only complaint I have is that the "mystery" of the brother could have been shown by the sister's perspective a little more deeply.

A very good book by a great writer.
