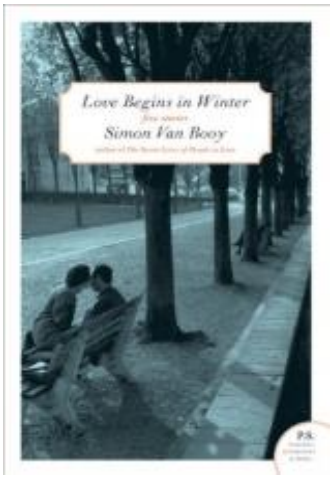
Love Begins in Winter: Five Stories

by Simon Van Booy



About the Book

On the verge of giving up --- anchored to dreams that never came true and to people who have long since disappeared from their lives --- Van Booy's characters walk the streets of these stark and beautiful stories until chance meetings with strangers force them to face responsibility for lives they thought had continued on without them.

Discussion Guide

1. In the title short story, why do the two main characters hold on to physical things --- acorns, stones, mittens, the grandfather's broken chair? Do you see these objects as physical burdens or as lovingly preserved souvenirs? What is your most precious possession and why?

2. In **Love Begins in Winter**, the narrator muses that, "The most significant conversations of our lives occur in silence" (42). Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

3. When Bruno and Hannah release their kites into the air in **Love Begins in Winter**, how does this simple action reflect how they have lived for the past 20 years?

4. Do you think that the act of the narrator in "Tiger, Tiger" biting her boyfriend at the end of the story is an acceptable regression to her child-like state --- a playful reinvention and display of her love? Or do you think she has just gone crazy? Do you think they stay together in the end? Why or why not?

5. In "The Missing Statues," discuss the relationship between the two cities of Las Vegas and Rome. Do you think it's strange that anyone would find beauty in a city like Las Vegas?

6. In "The Coming and Going of Strangers," do you agree with Walter's understanding of only experiencing one pure

first love? What does this contribute to your discovery that Walter ends up marrying Jane?

7. Also in "The Coming and Going of Strangers," why do you think the farmer stopped to pick up Walter's father and the child? Was it because he was in World War II?

8. Why does George in "The City of Windy Trees" live such an isolated life? Do you think George did the right thing by going to see his unknown daughter Lotta, in Sweden? What would you have done?

9. In George's letter to his sister Helen, he writes "I regret things I haven't done?rather than things I have --- strange eh?" What sorts of things do you think George wishes he'd done? Do you feel the same about your life?

10. In "The City of Windy Trees," all the adults work together to make a child's life happy. Is this true for other children in the book? Would you agree with the idea that children are the most important characters in Van Booy's fiction?

11. When Lotta and George are ice skating in "The City of Windy Tress", George breaks away "to skate clumsily but without falling over" (224). What type of metaphor for parenting is this? Do you find this to be true in your own life if you're a parent, or in the lives of other parents you know?

Author Bio

Simon Van Booy is the award-winning, bestselling author of more than a dozen books for adults and children, including THE ILLUSION OF SEPARATENESS and THE PRESENCE OF ABSENCE. Simon is the editor of three volumes of philosophy and has written for *The New York Times*, *The Financial Times*, *The Washington Post* and the *BBC*. His books have been translated into many languages and optioned for film. Raised in rural North Wales, he currently lives in New York where he is also a book editor and a volunteer E.M.T. crew chief.

Critical Praise

"Pitch-perfect? Convincingly shows how love rights the world."

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