



# Walks with Men

*Ann Beattie*

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It is 1980 in New York City, and Jane, a valedictorian fresh out of Harvard, strikes a deal with Neil, an intoxicating writer twenty years her senior. The two quickly become lovers, living together in a Chelsea brownstone, and Neil reveals the rules for a life well lived: If you take food home from a restaurant, don't say it's because you want leftovers for "the dog." Say that you want the bones for "a friend who does autopsies." If you can't stand on your head (which is best), learn to do cartwheels. Have sex in airplane bathrooms. Wear only raincoats made in England. Neil's certainties, Jane discovers, mask his deceptions. Her true education begins.

### Walks with Men Details

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## From Reader Review Walks with Men for online ebook

### Katie says

I really could not get into this book at all. I completely could not sympathize with, or relate to, the characters. I didn't enjoy the plot. I didn't really understand the purpose of the book. The writing style was distracting--lots of parantheses, changes in point of view, flashbacks all over the place, words that appeared to be used just to show off, and brief little paragraphs that didn't really fit in anywhere. Not my style at all.

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### Jessica says

Horrible, don't waste your time.

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### Macdonald says

An amazing character study. Very very true to the time. Ann Beattie is an artist who continues to grow in very interesting directions.

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### Nikki says

[he is secretly married (hide spoiler)]

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### Tia says

This was a total waste of my time. This book was so random and all over the place. There wasn't a storyline. Her "walks with men" were very dysfunctional and weird. I have so many unanswered questions. Where did her husband disappear to? The ashes? Ben and the train incident?? Her mother? Her relationship with her friends? I'm so confused. I'm just glad it's over and super glad it was only 102 pages long.

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### S. says

Everyone has had a mentor-as-lover at some point. If not, one should. Ideally the mentor-as-lover should appear before one turns thirty, when neural pathways are more like rambling and rather wistful dirt roads than the intricate super highways that deliver us to our doom, more or less, as older adults. (This is a Life Tip that could have been delivered by the protagonist's mentor-as-lover. At first I nod. Hmmmm: it seems wise. And then I want to punch whomever said it for his/her arrogance, for his/her glib, cheap theatrical oneliners. Perhaps toss a drink in his/her face for emphasis.)

There is a period in life when the Henry Higginses, Svengalis and Pygmalions of the world eyeball our youthful pliant selves and dream of stamping us with their brand names and releasing us into the universe as extensions of their own damaged egos. And the kicker is: we say "okay". "Sure." "Why not?" The implicit

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understanding is that these relationships have expiration dates: there is the molding and shaping phase, the radiant blossoming phase, the student challenging the teacher phase, and then the Leaving Phase, which can be bloody ugly or sappy and saccharine, depending.

Beattie tells the story after The Leaving phase, from the perspective of the student. I need to read this novel again, because it is excruciatingly minimalistic, thus packed with possibilities which are signified (in true Beattie style) with artifacts of a very specific culture: the Manhattan of the privileged, well educated and bored. There is the English raincoat, the certain blazer, the calculated nonchalance of a scarf twisted in this way, not that.

For the protagonist, the Devil is indeed in the details. He is in the banal habits and preferences that she allowed to be branded on her consciousness. She agreed to this before she was old enough, perhaps, to recognize what it was she was promising (or selling) in return. She is looking back at these events when she tells the story, traveling down old backroads and driving past important landmarks; yet her lack of insight is still maddening and it made me dislike her. I frequently have that reaction with Beattie's characters. She seems to have learned very little from the relationship except for a few concrete, absolute instructions that are superficial and stylistic and yet supposed to be pregnant with social meaning: no paper cocktail napkins; fishing bag, not purse. She seemed trapped on an expressway loop with no exits; with only the same cryptic, chic and ultimately meaningless billboards to orient her journey. She drives the same route, trapped, ever looking for the person she could have become if she'd chosen differently in those critical, pliant years, that time before one turns thirty.

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### **Kitty says**

It was really a one and a half star. Starts out with a lot of promise for such a short little book, and then it truly peters out. It is almost as if the writer said, "Oh, am I still writing this book?" ????

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### **Elizabeth Ruth says**

If you've ever slept with or loved an asshole in spite of yourself, then this book is for you.

Many critics didn't like the narrator's detachment, or accused this book as romanticizing abuse. What they're missing is that when you are in your early twenties, detachment and romanticizing abuse (which pretty much go together) and being swept up and easily impressed by worldliness and style and bohemianism are often what it's all about, red flags be damned. All of which frequently lead to sleeping with or being in love with men who are genuine asshats.

This book also beautifully captures the aftermath of that experience-- what happens when the infatuation wears off and the asinine sets in.

Minus one star for being a bit pretentious and New York. Not sure how much of that was part of the story, but at a certain point I don't care, it just makes me gag.

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### **Raquel says**

A ratos me resultó muy divertida, a ratos soporífera. Iba veces ágil, otras repetitiva. Un pequeño relato de

poco más de cien páginas denso y directo sobre la figura del amante-tutor, aquel que presume de abrir las puertas a la mujer a un mundo desconocido pero que luego resulta vender solo humo.

El tema está bien, es original, y la escritora tiene un lenguaje directo muy agradable pero me resultan desconcertantes algunas cosas, especialmente el destino de Neal (el amante, no digo nada más para no meter apiólese) y el final, tan abierto, tan "¿pero qué me quiere decir esta mujer con esta historia?"

Diferente, sí. Buen libro... uhmhhh

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### **Eliza says**

7/9/2010: This is a mystifying story...either I'm too old for its charms or require too much explanation in my fiction, but when I finished it I was so busy scratching my head trying to figure out what happened that I might have missed the point. Anyway, the writing is wonderful, and the tone is perfect. Many images will stick in my mind for a long time: the white robe pooling on the floor; the impossibility of sliding out of a diner banquette after a piece of bad news has been delivered; the ex-wife sitting on the steps of the building; the time capsule stuck in the tree. Beattie really nails the moment. But the story wanders. Barbara might have said it best, and she says she's quoting Beattie herself--that this really should have been a short story, it just got too long. As a short story, the disparate elements that never get tied together are more acceptable, I think. Also, Michael's point was helpful: this story will appeal to young women who may be or want to be in a situation like this. It's a fantasy, as such, and makes more sense that way than as a true nostalgic memoir.

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### **Terri says**

Ann Beattie is such a fine writer. I enjoyed this for her voice and her wit. The central relationship in the novella is an exaggerated version of one that's familiar to me. I think some women willingly stay in relationships where they're just being led around by the nose (even if they're terribly intelligent and sophisticated women who can argue to themselves and everyone else that it's not like that). I can see how the novella seems pretentious to some readers, but I feel like that's intentional--sort of a part of the joke/irony. While I don't need to be spoon fed, I do wish this were a little less disjointed. There's quite a lot of jumping around. A little bit more of an arrow pointing me somewhere as a reader would have been welcome.

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### **Danielle says**

what was meant to be profound. insightful. and romantic. turned out to be trite. infantile. and somber.

i am not fond of books that romanticize abusive relationships and abusive people.

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### **Alyssa Knickerbocker says**

I felt like I shouldn't like this book but I did. I love novellas--this one's like a long and luxurious short story, and the ending did just what a good ending should: it felt both inevitable and surprising. (I think that's a Margaret Atwood rule for short story endings.)

### **Bianca Sarah says**

Despite its critical acclaim, I found this novel--if you can even call it that--to be disappointing on all fronts. It is choppy and seems hacked together. The characters are vague sketches of people who the author seems incapable of making seem realistic or engaging, the relationship dynamics are insulting (Women have to watch their man's every move! Older men only date younger women to manipulate and ruin them!), and ultimately it reads like the scrap notes of a book that hasn't reached its second draft. Beattie tries way, way too hard, and ultimately fails in every way.

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### **Jenny (Reading Envy) says**

I added this to a Book Outlet order to get to \$35 for free shipping; they were smartly selling them at less than \$1 a piece. This is a book where nothing happens and it happens twice. Inexplicably some of the telling starts over halfway and it's already short. The female lets an older academic man treat her badly for no benefit and it's not even scintillating, it's somehow boring. Should have bailed.

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