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No one can write about baseball with the same brilliant combination of mysticism and realism as W. P. Kinsella. Lovers of the game and lovers of fine writing will thrill to the range of the eleven stories that make up this new collection. From the magical conspiracy of the title story, to the celestial prediction in *The Last Pennant Before Armageddon*, to the desolation of *The Baseball Spur*, Kinsella explores the world of baseball and makes it, miraculously, a microcosm of the human condition.

The Thrill Of The Grass Details

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From Reader Review The Thrill Of The Grass for online ebook

Mark Geisthardt says

W. P. Kinsella is best known for his book 'Shoeless Joe' which was made into the movie 'Field of Dreams.' 'The Thrill of the Grass' is a collection of his short stories, all about baseball in one way or another, and all fun to read. I'd read this book years ago but picked it up again this summer to revisit its stories and Kinsella's writing. The stories are primarily about minor league players and the struggles they have but as it comes to the end the stories are magical. This is a fun good read!

Jody Grant says

Kinsella who can write the poetry of baseball in the language of a man. Many years ago my father, wanting I suppose to influence my education, gave me copies of Metamorphosis and Shoeless Joe. So perhaps I have a distorted view of the greatness of Kinsella by the early company he kept on my bookshelf; or maybe I just like him because he reminds me of my dad. Still, the reader in me knows he's a wonderful storyteller even if given to the kind of fancy we so often (maybe too often) dismiss as trite.

Kathy says

If you love baseball and a good short story, this will be a walk in the park. Slightly weird at times, and maybe a bit dark around the corner, but definitely worth the trip. You will find something as pure as baseball turned into an allegory for life.

Ellen says

Kinsella is known for magical realism but only two of these stories were written in this style. the rest were more or less about troubled relationships, mysterious or angry women, and the men whose lives are anchored to baseball. These were uneven so my rating was 3 stars. "How I got my nickname" and the "thrill of the grass" we're my favorites though the former appeared to be autobiographical.

Julie says

We went to a baseball game this past June and saw our home team, the Colorado Rockies, play at Coors Field in Denver. My first time in 20 years of living here.

My observations were. . .

The stadium is monstrous, as though a simple bleacher shouted "Supersize me!" as it was being constructed,

and bad magic then occurred.

Beer was everywhere, including the bottom of my skirt, as soon as I sat down on my plastic seat. If someone's not sloshing some on you, you're stepping in it or you're smelling it. (God, I hate beer, especially on a new skirt or sticky on the bottom of a nice pair of shoes).

We were too far away from the "action," if any could be described as happening, and we realized, quickly, that we just don't know any of the local players.

And, in case it's unclear; this is a recipe for a bad evening. Within minutes, I wished I had stashed a novel next to the pepper spray in my handbag.

I entertained myself instead by watching the sun set over the gorgeous Rocky Mountains, or at least until a woman with large breasts and a tiny tank top stepped in and distracted my attention.

She was a Superfan, seated in front of me, and she kept shouting out particular players' names as her breasts begged to break free of both the confines of her clothing and the curse of our shitty seats. She was just dying to get closer to the owners of those tight poly pants. She and me, both, if only we could have been close enough to see them.

But, regardless, now I was interested. Now I had me some real entertainment. I got to watch Patty or Tracy or Stacie or whatever her name was shake her beer and her breasts in an attempt to summon the players. Wow, who was the player now? (Why did she even think they could possibly see her??) Everything was just plain old boring, until the woman arrived.

Who knew that just three months later my baseball experience would be mirrored by this book, *The Thrill of the Grass*?

There were several comparisons to be drawn. As I started this short story collection, with *The Last Pennant Before Armageddon*, I yawned right into my hand. Just as I had, earlier that summer, at the actual ball game. Baseball statistics are beyond boring to me, and boy is it a bad decision to start your short story collection with a bunch of them. I could fall asleep reading baseball stats (and I did, several times).

But, just as a colorful woman saved me from boredom in real life, as soon as a fictional woman entered the picture, in story #2, *The Baseball Spur*, W.P. Kinsella also had my attention:

*My own wife, Sunny, is squashed into the corner of the back seat behind me. She hasn't said a word since we left the ballpark in Cedar Rapids. I catch a glimpse of the red glow of her cigarette. She is tiny as a child sitting back there. **I wonder how someone so small and insignificant-looking can tear me apart the way she does.***

Ah. Now we were getting somewhere.

The Baseball Spur is a story that compares the average trajectory of a man's life with an average baseball player's career. They're never exactly what you'd want them to be, they're usually too short, and they're full of dead ends and unfulfilled dreams.

The wife, Sunny, is positively fascinating. She's the only one in the story who has an exit strategy, who keeps in motion to escape being trapped. But, does she have any more freedom than any one else? Who the

hell knows?

There's a surprisingly sexy story in this collection, too, the seventh one, *Driving Toward the Moon*. What it did is drive me to a cold shower. Ironically, it's about a fan and a player who spark an undeniable attraction.

The man: We are like magnet and metal, longing.

The woman: "I'm married too," she whispers, kissing me again in a way that tells me it doesn't matter at all.

That one's worthy of a re-read for sure.

Women saved almost all of these stories for me. Without them, Kinsella just wants to keep on playing with his damn balls.

In all but one. . . the unbelievably short title story, *The Thrill of the Grass*. In just 10 pages, Kinsella shows his readers how precise and impactful prose can be, if you keep it simple and make each word count.

It was brilliant, sir. Tugged hard at the heart, begged the world without being preachy. . . let us not always sell out, give in to greed, choose the artificial over the natural:

Baseball is meant to be played on summer evenings and Sunday afternoons, on grass just cut by a horse-drawn mower.

Yes. So is life.

Caroline says

A compendium of short stories about baseball by W.P. Kinsella, who wrote the book *Shoeless Joe*, upon which the movie *Field of Dreams* is based. To say that these stories are all exclusively about baseball would be incorrect. Instead, they more or less use baseball as an angle of approach. This is a smart way of doing things, and, I think, speaks highly of baseball's almost-universal applicability to matters of life and family.

There's no way to rate this story by story, which is a shame. If I could, however, the title story "The Thrill of the Grass" would be getting 5 stars and made all the rest of them worth reading. The language is absolutely beautiful, and it made me want to declare a guerilla war on astroturf, just like the one undertaken by its narrator. Other stories, I enjoyed less. In many of them, I got the impression that Kinsella is not exactly a fan of women, which dampened my enjoyment a little bit. There also seemed to be some unnecessary vulgarity in others.

Basically, baseball fan or not, pick this up for "The Thrill of the Grass." If you're a fan of the game, you'll want to go find a baseball diamond and lay down in the middle of center field and just rejoice. If you're not, it may shed some light on what this game means to the rest of us.

Mark says

The Thrill of the Grass, by W. P. Kinsella, 1984. Though I had read these short stories by Canadian author

W. P. Kinsella before, I was amused when I found myself opening the pages to the first story, "The Last Pennant Before Armageddon", as it revolves around the Chicago Cubs winning the pennant. Nice reading in 2016. Overall, these stories are well-written, funny, occasionally poignant. I love baseball, so I liked the baseball tie-in in each story, though it was not usually the center of the story. Worth reading, if you like good stories with a whimsical feel.

Nicholas says

W.P. Kinsella is probably the prose-laureate of baseball. He has a consistent voice in this whole collection of short stories, some very realistic, some very fantastic. He never forgets that almost all baseball is played by children and those in the minor leagues, but that those players always look toward the top level, and that the love of baseball is in the fans as much as the players. On a personal note, this is a book my father would love, because even the fantastic stories feel real enough for baseball, which holds magic to him even now.

matteo says

I was not happy with this book. I had read it years and years ago... and as with most things I remember from back in the day, it had a fairy tale-esque tint. I remembered it being more romantic and magical. Maybe I just did not get it then. Or maybe the stories do not age well. While a few of the stories did rekindle that baseball romanticism, I was left with more of a taste of bitterness, chauvinism, and unhappiness. These stories were not full of hope. They were about failure and wasted lives. I wish I had not read it again.

Jeremy says

I loved "Shoeless Joe" (which would later become "Field of Dreams") and his later collection of baseball stories (can't remember the name, something about Iowa...of course). I didn't really care for much of this one. It was like reading a collection of stories that didn't really have any direction ("Bud and Tom", especially, but also "Nursie" and a few others). "The Last Pennant Before Armageddon" was so stereotypical and two-dimensional that I was pissed off at the end. I mean he took a great premise (an angel that calls in to a sports radio program) and Armageddon hinging on the Cubs winning a pennant and completely jacked it up and made me not care. It wasn't as convincing as "Shoeless Joe" was.

What I love about Kinsella is that he mixes the supernatural with baseball (see: "Field of Dreams") to an extent that baseball becomes a symbol for so much more than just a sport where grown men wear ridiculous uniforms. That's also what I liked about his other collection, the one about Iowa. Many of the stories here were simply about baseball, or worse about shallow, unlikable, spent ex-athletes or soon to be ex-athletes behaving so stereotypically that I couldn't invest in their stories. The stories I did feel compelled and invested in ("The Night Manny Mota Tied the Record", "The Firefighter", "The Battery", "The Thrill of the Grass") were REALLY good because they spoke to something more, something aching about the human condition symbolized by baseball. My favorite was "The Battery", a mythical piece that compares favorably with a David Foster Wallace story along the same lines that I read recently ("Another Pioneer").

Granted these were all written before "Shoeless Joe" or his later collection, so I guess I should cut him some slack...maybe it's just a talented writer trying to find his voice.

Brandon says

Kinsella's male characters are always so deep and interesting. His female characters can be shallow and prop-ish, but they also have some mysterious nature that keeps them from being completely stereotyped. In the end, it is Kinsella's fearlessness with narrative that makes him so readable. Who else would write a short story about a baseball manager who believes his team may be bringing about armageddon? It's just great stuff.

Kip says

All of the stories in W.P. Kinsella's "The Thrill of the Grass" are about baseball. That's unsurprising, given the author's bibliography. But like his famous novel "Shoeless Joe" and the less prominent "The Iowa Baseball Confederacy," the sport is merely a vessel for exploring different human emotions in each of the collection's stories. Some are just as fantastic as the novel that spawned "Field of Dreams." "The Battery," a story about a pair of Dominican twins who take the majors by storm with the assistance of a hot-air-balloon obsessed wizard, is particularly fanciful. "The Night Manny Mota Tied the Record" toys with themes of mortality and sacrifice with just enough macabre sensationalism to rocket it out of the real world.

But other selections are more mundane. The title work is simply a story about obsessed fans trying to prepare the local field for the return of players after a strike strips them of their summer pastime. "Barefoot and Pregnant in Des Moines" and "Driving Toward the Moon" are both stories that explore the passion of young love within the context of the grind to get through the minor leagues. Still others aim only for the slapstick. "The Firefighter," in particular, renders baseball as background noise to a brilliant character study of rural America.

In short, "The Thrill of the Grass" is an exercise of a writer fascinated by the narrative possibilities that arise when baseball is merely a prism for the human condition. It's an excellent, light summer read for the beach or the bleachers that any fan of the sport or Kinsella's work should check out.

Kim says

Some of the short stories in this book were heartfelt and gratifying, but I became annoyed with Kinsella's overuse of the "awe shucks" good guy willing to do anything for a hard to control ungrateful girlfriend/wife. Kinsella is great at eliciting emotions when writing about devotion to the game of baseball, but his limited range concerning romantic relationships left me less of a fan of his writing.

Rocky Curtiss says

I like W. P. Kinsella's writing, but some of the stories were not that interesting; that is until the last one, "The Thrill of the Grass." That was quite fun.

Jeff says

While I feel that I am damning with faint praise a bit, this is a nice collection of stories. Kinsella has an unfussy prose style that still manages to be poetic when it needs to be. Some of the stories fall in line with the magical realism of his novel "Shoeless Joe", and they are fun. I actually liked the more realistic and rueful stories about minor-leaguers, some hopeful, some down-on-their luck, a little more.
