

The background features a network diagram with white circular nodes connected by thin purple lines. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming larger, more complex clusters. The background color transitions from a deep purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. The title text is centered in the upper half of the image.

Mothers, Tell Your Daughters: Stories

Written by Bonnie Jo Campbell

Published by ninastrattoria

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Mothers, Tell Your Daughters: Stories

By Bonnie Jo Campbell

Mothers Tell Your Daughters

Named by the Guardian as one of our top ten writers of rural noir, Bonnie Jo Campbell is a keen observer of life and trouble in rural America, and her working-class protagonists can be at once vulnerable, wise, cruel, and funny. The strong but flawed women of *Mothers, Tell Your Daughters* must negotiate a sexually charged atmosphere as they love, honor, and betray one another against the backdrop of all the men in their world. Such richly fraught mother-daughter relationships can be lifelines, anchors, or they can sink a woman like a stone.

Mothers Tell Your Daughters Song

In "My Dog Roscoe," a new bride becomes obsessed with the notion that her dead ex-boyfriend has returned to her in the form of a mongrel. In "Blood Work, 1999," a phlebotomist's desire to give away everything to the needy awakens her own sensuality. In "Home to Die," an abused woman takes revenge on her bedridden husband. In these fearless and darkly funny tales about women and those they love, Campbell's spirited American voice is at its most powerful.

Mothers Tell Your Daughters Bonnie Jo Campbell

3.5 There is something about the grittiness and hard realism of Campbell's writing that appeals to me. Although I realize she is not to everyone's taste, her books contain a darkness in people and life that many may find off putting. In these stories her characters are all hard living woman who have been through some terrible experiences. Rape, molestation when young, cheating boyfriends, cruel husbands and yet they go on living their lives, doing the best they can. Although seemingly tough they 3.5 There is something about the grittiness and hard realism of Campbell's writing that appeals to me. Although I realize she is not to everyone's taste, her books contain a darkness in people and life that many may find off putting. In these stories her characters are all hard living woman who have been through some terrible experiences. Rape, molestation when young, cheating boyfriends, cruel husbands and yet they go on living their lives, doing the best they can. Although seemingly tough they also show a marked vulnerability, many times in relation to their daughters or children. They all seem, despite bad choices, to yearn for something better, the things we all want, a secure home, relationship, family or just love.

Some of these were hard to read, some incredibly poignant or downright sad. One with a dog, was rather amusing. All in all a good grouping of stories, showcasing this author's remarkable talent.

ARC from publisher. ...more

I had previously enjoyed American Salvage and this set of stories did not disappoint! While before the focus was on various character in 21st century rural life, this collection focuses on women. Women who are trying to make ends meet, women who perpetuate abuse because they don't know a way out, women who believe their dog is the reincarnation of their ex. Ha.

Hands down the absolute best story in this collection is the title story. It is told from the point of view of a woman on a ventilator, t I had previously enjoyed American Salvage and this set of stories did not disappoint! While before the focus was on various character in 21st century rural life, this collection focuses on women. Women who are trying to make ends meet, women who perpetuate abuse because they don't know a way out, women who believe their dog is the reincarnation of their ex. Ha.

Hands down the absolute best story in this collection is the title story. It is told from the point of view of a woman on a ventilator, talking to her daughter. Of course only the reader can know what she says. I could hear traces of the women in my own family in this story - the use of "sis" to address a daughter (my Grandma does this to my Mom), the sense of keeping things to yourself.... "You can always find pain and suffering in this life, but why look for it? Before you went to college and got them degrees I had no idea there was something called women's studies that would teach you to poke around under the skin of women. Don't you know we need our skin to cover what's underneath, to protect us from the burn of air and sunlight? Women get themselves hurt every day ... but there's no sense making hard luck and misery your work." What are the lengths a woman will go to to try to see her family survive? What will she endure because there is no way out? Campbell explores these questions in various ways.

There are a few two-pagers and a few lighter stories that balance the rest. In the first few stories there are some characters who could use some mothering!

(As you've likely gathered, I received a review copy of this collection from the publisher via Edelweiss.)

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Mothers Tell Your Daughters Summary

Wow. Campbell is such a powerful voice in literature. Fearless. Raw. Honest. Emotional. These short stories about damaged women aren't easy reads, but they're remarkable.

I just read through some other reviews of this book. While most of these stories could be considered dark, I don't consider every last one of them to be wholeheartedly depressing. I see them more as honest. Bonnie Jo Campbell does not sugar coat her stories. These aren't reworked fairy tales of romance and happiness; these stories are real life.

Each of the 16 stories can carry their own weight. These are actual short stories; none are extremely long. But each is packed to the brim with heart. Th I just read through some other reviews of this book. While most of these stories could be considered dark, I don't consider every last one of them to be wholeheartedly depressing. I see them more as honest. Bonnie Jo Campbell does not sugar coat her stories. These aren't reworked fairy tales of romance and happiness; these stories are real life.

Each of the 16 stories can carry their own weight. These are actual short stories; none are extremely long. But each is packed to the brim with heart. The characters Campbell describes (women, mothers, sisters, daughters) scream off the page. They are strong and fragile at the same time.

I found myself enjoying the stories more and more as I went through the book. "Child of Transylvania, 1983" was absolutely gorgeous, and was probably the most positive out of all the stories. "Natural Disasters" at first seems like a lighthearted story; a pregnant woman is at her baby shower, completely encompassed about the worries of having a small baby. It's more than that though. She finds herself thinking of every possible thing that could go wrong, to the point where she wants to keep the baby inside of her. It's a poetic case study of postpartum anxiety, and is a story not often told.

I also loved how some of the characters reappeared in various stories.

I fell in love with Bonnie Jo Campbell's stories. She writes with honesty, yes dark honesty, but isn't that the world we live in? These stories are real. ...more

Mothers Tell Your Daughters Pdf

The rough woodsy flavors served up by the gifted Bonnie Jo Campbell, in this ripely overflowing selection, leaves us both puckering & bright-eyed. This writer has never shied away from the troubles that batter small-town America, the vanished industries that left behind toxins which eat away at both the water table & the family fabric, & all the stories in MOTHERS, TELL... raise the warning implied in the title. Or why not hear it, to use a fitting expression, straight from the horse's mouth? Says the title story's narrator, sick & pained, without the patience to pretty things up: "Women get themselves hurt every day -- men mess with girls in this life, they always have, always will..." The abuse of women is the abiding theme here; it gives even the two- & three-page stories (a new form for Campbell, handled adroitly) a bare-knuckled power. So too, every usurious & bruising love affair, even the few that entail getting married, reveal plainly the wear & tear of the local economics. Caught in the dead-end hardscrabble, chasing the withered carrot of a decent job, men wind up throwing their weight around in the kitchen or the bedroom. That includes, in the worst cases, their daughter's bedrooms. A sin & a shame, yes -- & yet the reading experience, as always in Campbell, never feels grinding or unrelenting. The mothers & daughters of MOTHERS, TELL... demonstrate a miracle resilience, & their steep learning curves can feel like roller-coasters. Even the harsh revelations of "Playhouse," with its innocence twice betrayed, emerge with a bumptious inventiveness; they startle us with physical comedy. More than one girl here overcomes a stunted education with a smart mouth, & the ravaged single mother in "Daughters of the Animal Kingdom" (a major work, a miniature novel) derives strength & warmth from unpromising sources, like for instance a chicken coop. Bonnie Jo Campbell may write of northern riverlands, Michigan & such, but in a great set of stories like this, she takes me to the Mississippi Delta; her every performance rings with the pain & pleasure of the country blues. ...more

Book on CD read by Christina Delaine

2.5**

From the book jacket The strong but flawed women of Mothers, Tell your Daughters must negotiate a sexually charged atmosphere as they love, honor, and betray one another against the backdrop of all the men in their world. Such richly fraught mother-daughter relationships can be lifelines, anchors, or they can sink a woman like a stone.

My reactions

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My reactions

I think it was a mistake to read/listen to Campbell's novel (Once Upon a River) back-to-back with this collection of short stories. I can take only so much distress, so much sexual tension and acting out, so much of watching women make bad choice after bad choice after even worse choice. There were a few stories that were quite funny in their hysteria – a young bride convinced her ex-husband was reincarnated in the mongrel dog she has adopted, or a pregnant woman imagining all the possible hazards (shoelaces, paperclips, the refrigerator!) her soon-to-be-born baby will face. But most were distressingly dismal and depressing.

And, frankly, I just have to wonder what kind of background the author has to write such gritty scenes – mothers virtually selling their daughters to a man, daughters overtly stealing their mothers' boyfriends, rapes and molestations, cruelty and despair. Campbell took me to a dark place, and I'm glad to be out of there and back in the sunlight.

Christina Delaine does a very good job performing the audio version. She had a plethora of characters to portray and she was definitely up to the task.

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Mothers Tell Your Daughters Book

Bonnie Jo Campbell is the trumpeter of the poor, the addicted, the people (often women) who are just getting by. In *American Salvage*, her last short story collection, she aimed a spotlight on rural Michigan and those who inhabit it, fully penetrating the lives who have learned not to expect too much from life. I loved it.

Not so much this one, which I found to be somewhat uneven. Here, BJC mines the same territory yet the portraits are darker and “ in my opinion “ less nuanced. Arguably the best, Bonnie Jo Campbell is the trumpeter of the poor, the addicted, the people (often women) who are just getting by. In *American Salvage*, her last short story collection, she aimed a spotlight on rural Michigan and those who inhabit it, fully penetrating the lives who have learned not to expect too much from life. I loved it.

Not so much this one, which I found to be somewhat uneven. Here, BJC mines the same territory yet the portraits are darker and “ in my opinion “ less nuanced. Arguably the best, the eponymous story is told in first-person by a hospice-bound mother dying of lung cancer to her bitter eldest daughter who blames her for (among other things) looking aside when she was molested. Written in the style of self-justification, the dialogue rings true and the story is incredibly poignant.

There are others I liked as well: *Playhouse*, where the uncomfortable dynamics of a brother and sister are highlighted, for example. *A Multitude of Sins*, focused on an abused woman and her dying husband who can no longer hurt her is also well-written.

Others, though, like *My Dog Roscoe*, strive for a comic tone and don’t quite make it. Too often, there’s a sameness in the parade of characters who have been molested, raped, or otherwise abused and it all started blending together. Somehow, I wanted more.

...more

I really enjoyed this. As many other reviewers have noted, several stories have to do with sexual assault or rape. So that is something to bear in mind if you're sensitive to that, but in my opinion, that wasn't the driving theme of this short story collection.

I think the boiled down version of these stories is the grit and wonder of being a woman. Campbell uses rural Michigan as a backdrop for stories of mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives living their lives the best way they know how. The c I really enjoyed this. As many other reviewers have noted, several stories have to do with sexual assault or rape. So that is something to bear in mind if you're sensitive to that, but in my opinion, that wasn't the driving theme of this short story collection.

I think the boiled down version of these stories is the grit and wonder of being a woman. Campbell uses rural Michigan as a backdrop for stories of mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives living their lives the best way they know how. The characters feel so alive on the page, even when their circumstances seem dire or a little silly. ...more

Mother Tell Your Lyrics

I LOVED this collection of stories. Every single one! Some of them were hard to stomach, especially the ones with dysfunctional mother-daughter relationships. Most all of the women in this collection were either emotionally, physically, or spiritually abused, but they made their way through life trying to be the best versions of themselves which endeared me to many of them.

Abused wives, pregnant teenagers, rape victims, and living in poverty makes being a woman in this fictional world especial I LOVED this collection of stories. Every single one! Some of them were hard to stomach, especially the ones with dysfunctional mother-daughter relationships. Most all of the women in this collection were either emotionally, physically, or spiritually abused, but they made their way through life trying to be the best versions of themselves which endeared me to many of them.

Abused wives, pregnant teenagers, rape victims, and living in poverty makes being a woman in this fictional world especially vulnerable. While I started out angry at them for giving the men free reign over themselves and often, their young daughters, I began to understand why. This is not a warm and fuzzy collection, but the stories are not depressing because through Campbell's skillful writing the characters are treated with dignity and respect.

My favorites were:

- 1) "Mothers, Tell Your Daughters" - Following a stroke a bedridden, dependent mother replays snapshots from her troubled past while her daughter cares for her.
- 2) "A Multitude of Sins" A wife is a caretaker for her verbally abusive dying husband.
- 3) "Somewhere Warm" A fifteen year old steals her mother's 25 year old boyfriend.
- 4) "My Dog Roscoe" is about a woman who finally has a great man in her life, only to fantasize that a stray dog that shows up at her door is her reincarnated old lover Oscar. Is she willing to give up a wonderful man for the fantasy of an old lover who came back to her as a dog only to continue to treat her like crap?

The other stories were excellent, and Campbell even wrote some two page stories that hit me like a cold bucket of water and left me with lots to think about. I'm off to purchase "American Salvage". ...more

"Bury me at the crossroads so my spirit can travel, so even in death I won't be forced to rest or grow mossy. Every one of you children were born at the crossroads, because every woman giving birth becomes a crossroads."

A startling short story collection about women in rural America covering tenuous relationships with their mothers, lovers, and children. My favorites were the title story and the final, The Fruit of the Pawpaw Tree.

Mother Tell Your

Earlier this year, in an online article for the Guardian, Tom Bouman ranked Bonnie Jo Campbell alongside the likes of James M. Cain, Flannery O'Connor, and Alice Walker when it comes to so-called "rural noir" fiction. In the comments section, readers threw out other names like Cormac McCarthy, Annie Proulx, and Jane Smiley. To my tastes, this is pure hodgepodge -- for some critics and readers it seems to encompass any fiction set outside the metropolises. In reality, Campbell's oeuvre seems fair. Earlier this year, in an online article for the Guardian, Tom Bouman ranked Bonnie Jo Campbell alongside the likes of James M. Cain, Flannery O'Connor, and Alice Walker when it comes to so-called "rural noir" fiction. In the comments section, readers threw out other names like Cormac McCarthy, Annie Proulx, and Jane Smiley. To my tastes, this is pure hodgepodge -- for some critics and readers it seems to encompass any fiction set outside the metropolises. In reality, Campbell's oeuvre seems fairly easy to peg: grim stories of depletion and exploitation set in America's de-industrialized Rust Belt.

Mothers, Tell Your Daughters collects 16 stories originally published in a variety of obscure journals and magazines. The title story is by far the standout of the collection, showcasing Campbell in full form and at her most authentic. In it, a bedbound, dying woman thinks through all the things she would say to her daughter, who still begrudges the mother for allowing an old boyfriend to molest her as a child. This is a woman who has lived a hard, thankless life, and she can't understand the modern fixation of women like her daughter on nursing old wounds:

You've got more than anybody else has got around here, but you still worry an old thing that got done to you worse than a dog worries a bone. A couple of nights of trouble makes your whole life bitter.

If only you'd seen what I've seen! A man drinking a pint of ginger brandy and then refusing to get out of the way of a train, holding out his arms like greeting an old friend. I've seen a little bitty man tell his little bitty wife she could go to hell and take her there himself.

This is stunning, but unfortunately its quality doesn't characterize the collection. The rest of the stories are fairly weak attempts at rehashing the same themes. So many deal with abuse, rape, and other sundry violence that their respective impact is undermined, and the whole book becomes an exercise in redundancy. "My Dog Roscoe" and "The Fruit of the Pawpaw Tree" are welcome attempts at levity, but the humor falls flat. Two of the stories are memorable only because their setting is outside the Midwest: "The Greatest Show on Earth, 1982: What There Was," which takes place in a circus train car parked in Phoenix, and "Children of Transylvania, 1983," set in Romania during the Ceausescu era.

To be sure, Bonnie Jo Campbell is doing good, honest work by shining a light on America's shadowy interior. Her ongoing Midwest project deserves comparisons to Ron Rash's treatment of Appalachia, or Daniel Woodrell and the Ozarks. She presses her readers to see beyond sentimentalized images of bucolic fields of grain, or the folksy innocence we often associate with the "Heartland." Her protagonists are the women who occupy the factories, farms, kitchens, bedrooms, and county bars of what is often treated as a shapeless expanse between New York and Los Angeles. Even when she doesn't quite hit the mark--and this collection is largely a miss--we can still respect her for trying. ...more

Mothers, Tell Your Daughters: Stories

I kinda wish this was called "Fathers, tell your sons" because men need to read this