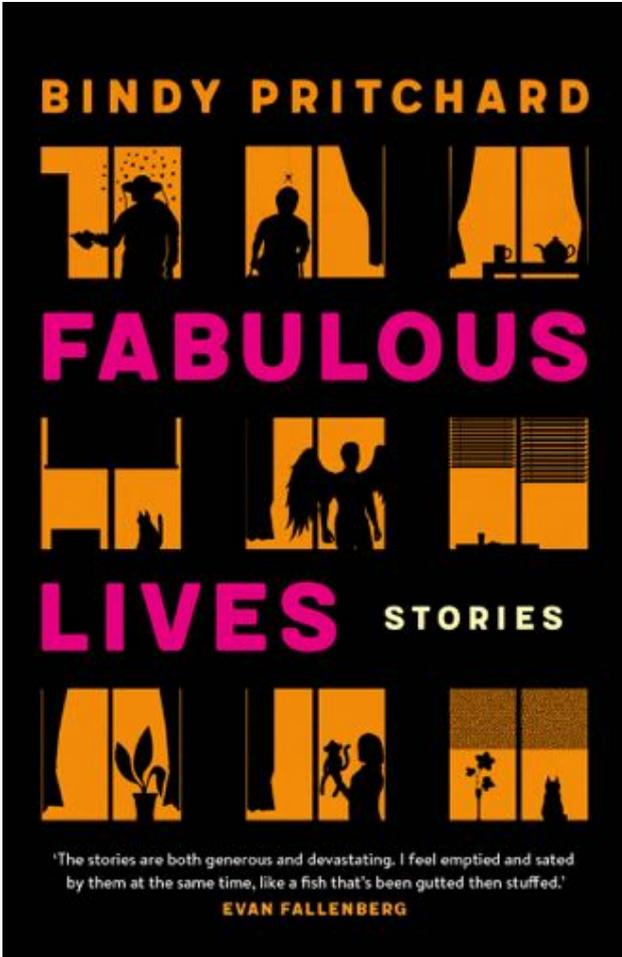




MARGARET RIVER
• PRESS •



ISBN: 9780648485049

FABULOUS LIVES

A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES

BY BINDY PRITCHARD

SUMMARY

A lonely woman helps a beautiful man in the midst of Mardi Gras; a suburban father imagines a prehistoric egg to be his ticket out of a loser's life; a monkey puppet returns an elderly woman to a childhood secret...

Fabulous Lives is a collection of short stories spanning Australia and other continents. It embraces people with all their frailties and strengths, failures and hopes, as they reach critical junctures in their lives.

In a wry, wise voice, Bindy Pritchard juxtaposes the marvellous and mythical with the quotidian, the whimsical and surreal with the everyday, bringing her motley cast of characters to moments of revelation and, perhaps, re-evaluation.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bindy Pritchard is a Perth-based writer, whose short fiction appears in various anthologies and literary journals such as *Westerly*, *Kill Your Darlings* and *Review of Australian Fiction*.

Bindy has a Graduate Diploma in Creative Writing from Curtin University.

Fabulous Lives is her debut short story collection.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

General

Discuss ways that the characters' lives in the collection are considered to be 'fabulous'. Is there a sense of irony in the title?

Which of the characters in the collection is the "fabulous you" and why?

Which of these stories do you like the most and why?

What are some of the major themes of the collection as a whole? Is there a distinctive voice throughout the collection?

The Shape of Things

What are the different shapes in this story and what do they represent? Does Leonie change shape by the end of the story?

Do you think the mystery man is a real angel?

Discuss how Leonie's homophobia and prejudices play out in the narrative. What has been the basis of her previous biases?

Dying

How does the structure of the narrative link to the theme of dying?

Discuss the ways the distance between the living and the dying grows greater in this story.

What is your response to the ending of the story? Is the ending uplifting or devastating?

Happy Days

Would you describe this story as a typical Rites of Passage story? Has Josh undergone any significant transformation?

How are the characters of Ollie and Josh similar or dissimilar?

If setting is like a character, describe the character of the bowling alley.

Fabulous Lives

Discuss the central theme of the story. Do you relate to Edith's sense of failure?

Do you think Edith loves or hates Ricky? How does the ending reveal Edith's real relationship with Ricky?

What does the minor character, Samy represent in the story?

Bees of Paris

How has Louise's passivity affected her life choices?

Why do you believe Louise left the bee keeper boyfriend?

What is the significance of the entombed lodger?

In Transit

What is the significance of the title? Discuss the ways the characters are in transit.

What does the *nutsia floribunda* represent? Discuss how this symbolism works in the narrative.

Is the topic of mental illness handled sensitively?

The Egg

What does the egg represent to Bryant and why is it so important?

Do you think Bryant is paranoid or are strange things really happening because of the egg?

Is Bryant a victim in the end or victorious?

The Returning

What is the motivation for Ellie's return to Germany? Is Ellie stuck in the cycle of the past? How is this reflected in the story?

Discuss memory and trauma in relation to this story. How reliable are Ellie's recollections of the events?

Is Germany a different place now or are things still the same for Ellie (her appearance, thoughts, speech)?

Monkey Puppet

Discuss how this story conveys the idea that abuse cycles can be carried on.

Describe Elizabeth's relationship with her sister, Naomi. Do you believe she has forgiven her sister?

Is the ending shocking or surprising?

Arrow

In what way does Fran's dysfunctions impact on her son, Damien?

What do the paint colours represent throughout the narrative?

Why is the arrow shot through Fran's heart? What does it represent?

In Memoriam

Describe the relationship between Cousin Deidre and Melanie.

Discuss the importance of the setting in this story. How does the chaos of Deidre's home correspond to the psyches of both the main female characters?

How does Melanie move from passivity to empowerment by the end of the narrative? What has effected the change?



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Goddess of Fire and Wind

What is the central theme of this story?
Do you think Margaret is happily married? Why hasn't she left her husband?
Who are the different goddesses in the story and what power do they hold, if any?

Warm Bodies

Describe Hughes' relationship with his wife Kate. In what ways does his broken promise affect their relationship?

What does the mountain really represent to Hugh?

Do you find Hugh an empathetic character? Why/why not?

What are the cultural representations in this story? Do they rely on stereotypes?

Sea Wrack

Do you like the character of Katrina? Why, why not?

How is the environmental devastation symbolic of Katrina's lifestyle choices?

Is the stranger's arrival by boat an agent for change for Katrina?

Describe Katrina's relationship with her father. How has this affected the trajectory of her life?

Thread

Is Katherine a likeable character? Is it important to like the protagonist in a story?

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

Jungle Without Water, by Sreedhevi Iyer

Growing Up African in Australia, edited by Maxine Beneba Clarke

Going Postal: More Than 'Yes' or 'No', edited by Quinn Eades

Your Duck Is My Duck, by Deborah Eisenberg

Things We Lost In The Fire, by Mariana Enriquez

Homesick for Another World, by Otessa Moshfegh

Trick of the Light, by Laura Elvery

COMMENTARY

'The stories in *Fabulous Lives* are generous and off-beat, illuminating characters whose lives are stuck in a loop but who might be about to be surprised. Pritchard's writing is precise, often funny, and the voices she creates are extremely engaging. I was delighted with her short story conceits, which are original and sympathetic, and told beautifully. This is a terrific collection.'—Laura Elvery, award-winning Australian author.

'The stories are both generous and devastating. Somehow I feel both emptied and sated by them at the same time, like a fish that's been gutted then stuffed.' —Evan Fallenberg, award-winning Israeli author.