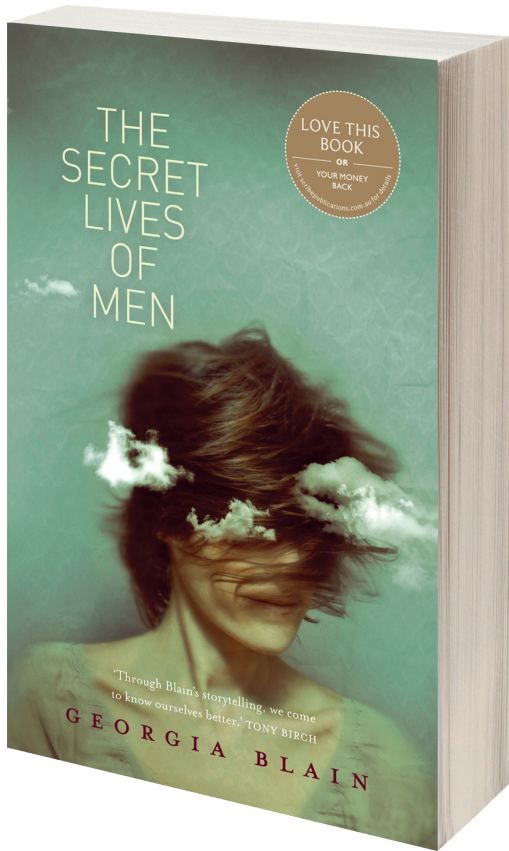


# The Secret Lives Of Men

GEORGIA BLAIN



## BOOK DETAILS

Format: paperback

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## AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Georgia Blain has published novels, a memoir, essays and short stories in Australia and overseas. Her first novel, *Closed for Winter*, was made into a film. She has been shortlisted for numerous awards, including the NSW and SA premier's literary awards, and the Nita B. Kibble Award. Her most recent novels include *Too Close to Home* and *Darkwater*, her first young-adult book.

In these thirteen short stories, Georgia Blain examines human nature in all its richness: our motivations, our desires and our shortcomings. The men in these tales frequently linger at the edges — their longings and failures exerting a subterranean pull on the women in their lives. In 'The Secret Lives of Men', a woman revisits her hometown and learns a long-held secret about her first boyfriend. In 'The Bad Dog Park', a man's devotion to his dog ultimately forces him to confront his true hopes and fears. And in 'The Other Side of the River', we watch as a woman makes a snap decision about her life's future direction, with devastating consequences for her family. Written in Blain's trademark unadorned yet powerful prose, these stories resonate long after they are finished.

*The Secret Lives of Men* is an exceptional collection by one of Australia's leading writers.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How successfully do you think the title applies to the collection as a whole? Are there certain themes that the author returns to?
2. Which story most stood out for you, and why?
3. In many of these stories the central characters find it difficult to articulate their grief. Do you think this is as much an issue for the women in these tales as for the men? Compare 'Enlarged + Heart + Child' and 'The Bad Dog Park' as an example.
4. Discuss the nature of regret as it appears in these stories. Can you think of an example where a character is holding on to their past, and one where a character is coming to terms with their actions?
5. In 'Intelligence Quotient', the central character, Lena, is surprised when Juliette says that they are similar. What aspects of Lena's character do you think Juliette is referring to? Do you agree that the women are similar?

REVIEWS

‘Richly imagined characters ... told with lovely restraint. The authenticity of the writing is such that you feel you are standing in the shoes of these characters whose lives are at a particularly intense point’ — *Herald Sun*

‘Subtle, beautifully paced stories ... a finely tuned collection, thoughtfully written and arranged, with profound and unsettling things to say about love, loneliness, and risk.’

— *Australian Book Review*

‘Many adjectives have been used to describe Georgia Blain’s work, including evocative, powerful, atmospheric, haunting, rich, thought-provoking, skilful, uncompromising and finely detailed — all of which apply to this collection of short stories.’ — *Bookseller & Publisher*

6. Many of the women in this collection could be described as ‘outsiders’ — in what ways do you think women come to be outsiders? Do you think most people feel they are, in some sense, outsiders?
7. What do you think is the significance of the statue at the end of ‘Just a Wedding’?
8. What do you think are Ellen’s motivations for leaving her husband in ‘The Other Side of the River’? How do you think she feels about her decision many years later?
9. In ‘North from South’, how do you think Jai’s death affects how Kat feels about their friendship? Do you think the money he leaves her will enable her to change direction?
10. What moral ambiguities are raised in ‘Mirrored’, in terms of parenting, men and women, and cultural differences?
11. What is the mother-daughter dynamic between Clara and Sinead in ‘Her Boredom Trick’? Do you think this dynamic will change? In general, do you believe people can change?
12. How are the men in these stories (even those who appear only on the sidelines) influencing the decisions of the women in their lives? What pull — if any — do they exert on their choices?
13. Which character/s, if any, do you personally relate to? Which characters seem particularly difficult to understand? Why?



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