

# The Fogging

LUKE HORTON



## BOOK DETAILS

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## AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Luke Horton's writing has appeared in various publications, including *The Guardian*, *The Saturday Paper*, and *The Australian*, and was shortlisted for the Viva La Novella prize. The former editor of *The Lifted Brow Review of Books*, he currently teaches creative writing at RMIT, and is a member of acclaimed indie-rock band Love of Diagrams. *The Fogging* is his debut novel, and was highly commended for the Victorian Premier's Award for an Unpublished Manuscript in 2019.

A compelling tale of the slow disintegration of a relationship and the unravelling of a man.

Tom and Clara are two struggling academics in their mid-thirties, who decide to take their first holiday in ten years. On the flight over to Indonesia, Tom experiences a debilitating panic attack, something he hasn't had in a long time, which he keeps hidden from Clara. At the resort, they meet Madeleine, a charismatic French woman, her Australian partner, Jeremy, and five-year-old son, Ollie, and the two couples strike up an easy friendship. The holiday starts to look up, even to Tom, who is struggling to get out of his own head. But when Clara and Madeleine become trapped in the maze-like grounds of the hotel during 'the fogging' — a routine spraying of pesticide — the dynamics suddenly shift between Tom and Clara, and the atmosphere of the holiday darkens.

Told with equal parts compassion and irony, and brimming with observations that charm, illuminate, and devastate, *The Fogging* dives deep into what it means to be strong when your foundation is built on sand.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Travel features heavily in the book. What does the impulse to travel, and the experience of travelling, reveal to us about ourselves and our relationships?
2. There is the literal fogging, but are there metaphorical foggings in the book too?
3. How do you read Clara, considering the book is written from Tom's perspective?
4. Anxiety is a major theme in the book. How do you explain Tom's anxiety? What aspects of his life, and his and Clara's life together, might contribute to his anxiety disorder?
5. Is there something about mental health, particularly anxiety disorders, that makes it difficult for men to talk about it?
6. Why do you think Tom is unable to talk openly with

## REVIEWS

‘Claustrophobic and vertiginous ... an unshrinking and skilfully drawn portrait of a decaying relationship. In restrained prose, Horton illuminates the darker edges of masculinity. His is a frequency finely tuned to silences, gaps of language and meaning, things left unsaid — and their cumulative weight. Like a brewing storm on an oppressive summer day, *The Fogging* is quiet but assured, building towards the thunderclap of its final pages.’

— JENNIFER DOWN, AUTHOR OF *OUR MAGIC HOUR*

‘*The Fogging* is disquieting, compelling, and scrupulously observed, exploring themes of mental illness, interconnectedness, and selfhood. Horton observes his characters with a clear and compassionate eye, rendering his protagonist’s utter humanity and chronic isolation with stark tenderness and an honesty that moves.’

— LAURA MCPHEE-BROWNE, AUTHOR OF *CHERRY BEACH*

‘I loved *The Fogging*. It’s such a finely controlled novel, so filled with creeping dread and yet so humane in its attention to psychological detail — those subtle doubts and delusions upon which relationships are built — that I could not look away. It raises the quiet inadequacies of ordinary life to the level of grand tragedy.’

— MILES ALLINSON, AUTHOR OF *FEVER OF ANIMALS*

Clara? Why is Clara unable to talk openly with Tom?

7. What are the ethical considerations about writing a story set in another culture?
8. How does the setting contribute to the story?
9. How does Madeleine and Jeremy’s relationship contrast with Tom and Clara’s?
10. Do you think having a relatable, or sympathetic character is important in a book? Where do sympathies lie in the story?
11. Why does Clara do what she does towards the end of the novel?
12. Discuss the book’s ending. What happens next for Tom and Clara?