



BOOK DETAILS

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Georgia Blain wrote novels, essays, short stories, and memoir. Her first novel *Closed for Winter*, was made into a film and her work has been shortlisted for numerous awards. *Between a Wolf and a Dog* was awarded the 2017 VPLA. Georgia passed away in December 2016.

Outside, the rain continues unceasing; silver sheets sluicing down, the trees and shrubs soaking and bedraggled, the earth sodden, puddles overflowing, torrents coursing onwards, as the darkness slowly softens with the dawn.

Ester is a family therapist with an appointment book that catalogues the anxieties of the middle class: loneliness, relationships, death. She spends her days helping others find happiness, but her own family relationships are tense and frayed. Estranged from both her sister, April, and her ex-husband, Lawrence, Ester wants to fall in love again. Meanwhile, April is struggling through her own directionless life; Lawrence's reckless past decisions are catching up with him; and Ester and April's mother, Hilary, is about to make a choice that will profoundly affect them all.

Taking place largely over one rainy day in Sydney, and rendered with the evocative and powerful prose Blain is known for, *Between a Wolf and a Dog* is a celebration of the best in all of us — our capacity to live in the face of ordinary sorrows, and to draw strength from the transformative power of art. Ultimately, it is a joyous tribute to the beauty of being alive.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. The title of the book, *Between a Wolf and a Dog*, comes from a French expression, *L'heure entre chien et loup* which refers to the twilight hour between day and night, where shadows make it difficult to tell the difference between a wolf and dog. Do you think the title evokes a certain feeling throughout the book? If so, what is it?
2. Ester, April, Hilary, and Lawrence each have their story told from their own perspective. Why do you think this narrative device was chosen?

REVIEWS

‘The clarity, warmth, and precision of *Between a Wolf and a Dog* brings to mind the formal beauty of an exquisitely cut gemstone. Blain looks at the big questions — mortality, grief, forgiveness — through the lens of one family’s everyday struggle to love each other. This portrait of marriage and work, of sisterhood, mothers, and daughters is resolute and clear-eyed; so commanding and beautifully written it made me cry.’

CHARLOTTE WOOD, AUTHOR OF *THE NATURAL WAY OF THINGS*

‘[A]n elegant novel, written in lucent and, at times, luminous prose. It is a work of delicately detailed emotion and beautiful balance, and it is so well paced that its narrative is utterly compelling. It is a remarkable portrayal of family relationships, and the complex and often competing desires and sensitivities that drive them, but it is mostly a book about love and forgiveness, and holding on to our good fortune and our loved ones, even and especially in the face of loss. It is heartfelt and resonant, and a remarkable novel that lingers long after its final page.’ **FIONA WRIGHT**, *WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN*

3. Each of these four characters has a deep sadness — in some cases related to each other. How do you think that sadness is expressed throughout the book in their actions?
4. We don’t find out the secret between Lawrence and April until towards the end of the book. Were you surprised by this reveal? And did it change your opinion of the characters?
5. Hilary has a sense of solitariness in her illness. Even though she has her daughters to support her, she wants autonomy over her own body. What do you think about Hilary’s final decision? And how do you think Ester and April will react to Lawrence’s part in it? How do you think Lawrence will feel about the part he’s played?
6. The relationship between Ester and April is fraught with disappointment and betrayal. We get the impression that this has been the case since they were children. Discuss the sisters’ relationship and how it affects the wider family.
7. On page 196, Blain writes of Lawrence, ‘This was the way it had always been. As soon as he finally held what he wanted in his hands, he lost it.’ What has Lawrence lost? Discuss the part he plays in each of the women’s stories.
8. Amidst the hurt and sadness scattered throughout this book, there is a beautiful, warm sense of love and compassion. Where did you find this? And between which characters?
9. Do you think April and Ester will reconcile? Why or why not?
10. Discuss the themes of mortality, grief, and forgiveness as expressed in the book.



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