



## **Metro Winds**

*Isobelle Carmody*

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**Metro Winds** Isobelle Carmody

An engrossing collection of stories from one of Australia's most loved fantasy writers, and creator of the acclaimed Obernewtyn Chronicles.

A girl is sent across the world to discover her destiny in the dark tunnels of the Metro. Another seeks a lost sister in a park where winter lasts forever. A young man fulfils a dying wish. A mother works magic to summon a true princess for her son. A man seeks an ending to his story. An old man goes in search of his shadow.

This is a world of desire and transformation, the real and the not real, from the queen of modern fantasy.

## Metro Winds Details

Date : Published May 2012 by Allen & Unwin (first published April 26th 2012)

ISBN : 9781865084442

Author : Isobelle Carmody

Format : Paperback 400 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Short Stories, Young Adult, Fiction, Anthologies

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## **From Reader Review Metro Winds for online ebook**

### **Diane Warrington says**

I have never read Carmody before and I was enthralled by her writing. These are a collection of beautiful stories because she times the time to tell the story, even the shorter ones. I became totally engrossed in each story because of the wonderful characterisation and the settings. These were described with such clarity that I felt the snow and heard the wind. Some beautiful ideas and clever references to fairy tales that asks the reader to look at these stories in a new way. Utterly enjoyable reading that manages to combine mystery, fantasy and reality.

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### **Lucy says**

i hated it.

i only 2 star bc wolf prince wasn't torture to read. that all u get from me smfh.

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### **Frederick Lopez says**

Metro Winds is a short story anthology published by Isobelle Carmody in 2012.

It contains six stories. In genre terms I'd describe them as Magic Realist, and European fairytales is the closest they get to a unifying theme. The back cover provides a blurb for each one. I like this idea, and I'd like to see it in more short story anthologies. (Although it wouldn't be practical for any anthologies with more than ten or so stories.)

I haven't read any Carmody since primary school, but I can tell that she is still a good writer. A bit ornate, but such flourishes can be attributed to the voices of her first-person narrators. The stories are either set in Australia or an unidentified European country. Judging by her bio, I'm guessing that country is Czechoslovakia.

My favourite story was 'The Girl Who Could See The Wind.' The main character was a girl who had to deal with immigration, her unusual heritage and help in the rescue of her younger sister. Set in Australia, the main magic was clearly European, although Aboriginal mystical traditions received a nod.

I'd recommend this collection to Neil Gaiman fans. If they liked Neverwhere or the Sandman, they'll enjoy this.

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### **Lucinda says**

I'm going to be honest, this was a really difficult read. Some of the short stories were extremely interesting

and I would have enjoyed an entire novel on these, however others were very slow paced and required significant effort to finish. I particularly liked Metro Winds and The Girl Who Could See The Wind; these were the reason that I still gave the book 2 stars. I would recommend only these two short stories. The stories were all fantasy based and many bore resemblance to old fairytales which was quite interesting to read. The main part that I liked about these stories is that they were able to combine childhood stories with a dark twist which added depth and dynamics to the collection.

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### **Aphie says**

The worlds on display in these short stories have somehow gotten all twisted up with Gaiman's stuff, because they share a lot of sensibilities. The clunky title put me off picking this book up for a long time, but it's amazing - Carmody is as obsessed with fairytales and the shared stories of our culture as I am, especially with princesses and fairies - and her re-imaginings are deliciously dark and complex. This is a far more grownup collection than Green Monkey Dreams. There, she was celebrating the early teenaged blooming. Here are stories about motherhood and the explorations of adulthood. I really, really liked this book. It felt like home.

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### **Maree Kimberley says**

Isobelle Carmody has been one of Australia's most prolific writers of fantasy and speculative fiction. Many have loved her young adult fiction, but this collection of short stories (one almost a novella) is both for those who have grown up with her books and those approaching her work for the first time as an adult. Lyrical, lush and magical, these stories straddle reality we see and that which is just out of reach and knit them together into spell binding stories.

The title story, Metro Winds, is about a young girl who is taken from her home in a cold, isolated landscape to live with a rich relative in the city. This story sets the tone of magic realism, of unseen worlds just out of reach, that runs throughout this collection. The second story, the Dove Game, was my favourite. I particularly love the way that Carmody writes about places that are recognisable but not quite the real thing, and this story, about a circus that may or may not be real, set in Paris, is gorgeously otherworldly. Carmody seems to lean towards dark, wintry landscapes, and The Girl who could See the Wind is a gorgeous example of her ability to create a visual landscape as a 'character' in the story.

The Stranger was probably my least favourite of the collection, although it drew me in by the end and has a satisfying roundness to the narrative. The Wolf Prince, at just under 150, is almost a novella, and is the most 'traditional' of the stories, with its twist on the classic tropes of fairy tales.

The final story, The Man who Lost his Shadow, was my standout favourite. In my view, this story is Carmody at her absolute best. I can't really describe it. Just read it. It is pitch perfect writing.

Carmody has always been one of my personal writing heroes and with this collection my admiration for her has deepened. It's a fantastic, original collection from a masterful storyteller.

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## **Dark Matter says**

Metro Winds by Isobelle Carmody is a series of fairy tales for a YA or adult market (not for children), presented as short stories and one novella in one volume. Most of these are original stories with one notable retelling of a classic tale, reimagined in the most creative way I've read to date. It's very difficult to talk about short stories without giving away spoilers so I recommend listening to Isobelle's author talk and reading for more information: she presents Metro Winds beautifully, better than I, plus – added bonus – she explains why it's been so hard for her to finish the Obernewtyn Chronicles.

Many of Isobelle's fairy tales are in two or three acts: the introduction where the background is established and the reader meets key characters, a transition that is sometimes a transition point and at others an act in itself, and the finale where some kind of conclusion is wrought to the plot and/or the character/s. Sometimes this feels like a launching pad for the reader to dream their own sequel, a feature of storytelling too often replaced with i's dotted, t's crossed and no room for further flights of imagination.

Isobelle's prose is enchanting; I also enjoy her perspectives of social issues, characters and life. I particularly enjoyed Isobelle's comments on beauty scattered through some of the stories. 'The strange blandness of extreme beauty' describes how I see the faces of supermodels like Elle McPherson; I felt a real connection with Isobelle's world-view at that point. She went on, 'What most people called beauty was so often really just youth and the health that naturally went with it, combined with regular features. That was why all gorgeous people looked more alike than ordinary people.' YES. THIS. Shortly before my son left home, we sat down to watch a movie together that he really wanted to watch. Even on our 45" TV I became really confused about who was who because so many of the actors looked alike that I couldn't follow the movie at all. Isobelle's perspective on beauty really connected with something in the core of who I am, where I believed that it was just my disability that made me a freak in my perception and appreciation of beauty. Words cannot express the significance to me of Isobelle's comments in the narrative on beauty.

My only reservation was one of the later stories with a male protagonist, which somewhat repulsed me, but others will rave about it.

I thoroughly enjoyed Metro Winds even though I'm usually dissatisfied with the brevity of short stories. Highly recommended. Ideal for short commutes or leaving on the coffee table, to read short stories while having breaks.

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## **Ceinwen Langley says**

This felt pretty hit and miss to me. More beautiful language than in Green Monkey Dreams, but not quite as moving or charming.

I felt much more engaged by the stories about the women than the men, though that might just be personal preference. I don't think I understood the Man Who Lost His Shadow, and was disappointed by the way it ended, and the fact that it was the final story in the book.

More great original fairytales from Isobelle Carmody. It might not be my favourite of her books, but it's still a definite recommend.

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## Alex says

I've been a fan of the *Obernewtyn Chronicles* as well as the *Legendsong* for quite some time, so I picked up Isobelle Carmody's latest offering with an expectation of dreamy, immersive fantasy. This expectation was only partially met. Though all six stories contain fantastical elements, all are grounded in our world. Further, there is a more literary quality to the writing than I am used to for this author, which also meant I spent some time adjusting.

The first story, "Metro Winds", is about a young girl who moves to live with her aunt in the city and becomes drawn to the tunnels of the metro. The writing in this story is simply beautiful; there is a poetic, magical quality to it, almost as if it's for children. I found the ending unsatisfying on a conceptual level, but it's worth reading for the language alone.

Next comes "The Dove Game", in which an Australian travels to Paris to meet a woman on behalf of a dead man. This story reads a bit more like general fiction, with the fantasy elements blended into the psychological confusion of the protagonist. While it's a perfectly decent story, the style felt a little generic. I can't help but feel as if it could have been written by any number of literary short story writers and it didn't really grip me as much as the other stories did.

At a little under a hundred pages is "The Girl Who Could See The Wind". Here a girl is taken to a foreign land by her mother and eventually embarks on a quest to find her lost sister. This was one of my favourite stories in the book, being one of those pleasantly sweet kind of stories with allusions to various fairy tales. The writing style is more similar to the author's other works too, which is to say it's easy to read, dream-like and evocative. As a side note, (implied) indigenous Australians are portrayed in this story as spiritual people connected to the land, and I for one cannot decide whether this was respectful or cliched or both or neither.

I found the fourth story, "The Stranger", to be the book's weakest. It's about a scriptwriter who travels to Greece and meets a strange woman. While the narrator's voice was novel (for example, how he sees reality as if it was shot as a movie), this alone was not enough to sustain my interest the whole way. It's alright, but not much happens for most of the story and I was constantly counting how many pages of it I had left.

"The Wolf Prince" was the other favourite of mine. It's the longest story of the collection and it involves a cursed faerie prince who must hunt a princess in order to save himself. It's told from the point of view of the queen who herself was hunted as a girl. The style is similar to the third story, albeit the fantasy here is front and centre. Again, fairy tales are inventively woven into the story, itself steeped with richness. It's a truly lovely read.

The last story is "The Man Who Lost His Shadow", and involves the eponymous hero searching for his shadow in an unnamed European country. It's stark and strangely refreshing after the previous story, and the absurd notion of losing a shadow is treated with a kind of frank practicality. The style is vaguely reminiscent of Peter Carey.

All the stories are quite varied – in style, tone and narrative. I personally found this jarring when reading them all one after the other; it might help if you think of the stories as being written by different authors, so you know to expect something different each time.

Still, despite the differences, common threads run through all the stories: the idea of a quest and the sense that a different world sits entwined with our own. Australia or Australians also feature in an express or implied manner, which adds another flavour to the tales.

Basically, if you're looking for a pure fantasy kick, you can just read "The Girl Who Could See The Wind" and "The Wolf Prince". The others have a more ~literary~ general fiction kind of feel to them. All are well written. That said, while I was fine with reading it, there were also many times that I felt no compulsion to pick the book up again after having put it down. The author sets the bar so high with some stories that others seem lacking by comparison.

I've seen this book shelved in the YA section, but I would only recommend it to older teens or adults.

As a collection, *Metro Winds* feels a little patchy to me, though I admit this may be because I started the book with certain expectations. It's worth a shot if you're into literary fiction with a dash of magic. However, if you just want something similar to Carmody's fantasy series, then I'd just read the the odd-numbered stories.

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### **Ebony says**

It was a little strange, but it wasn't too bad.

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### **Anna Ryan-Punch says**

This review originally appeared in Viewpoint: On Books for Young Adults

*Metro Winds* is a collection of six stories of the fantastic and faerie. The back cover suggests that this collection is aimed at adult readers who have grown up reading and enjoying Carmody's work, a market which I fit into quite well, having started with Obernewtyn in about 1993 (aged 13), and followed that up with reading almost every book she published thereafter.

In the title story 'Metro Winds', a young girl is sent to live with her aunt, who is quickly unnerved by the girl's cool and fearless interest in the less savoury aspects of the city. Alone in the underground network of the metro tunnels, the girl discovers something that no one else can see, and with it the nature of her destiny. In 'The Dove Game', a jackeroo travels to Paris to fulfil the dying wish of a stranger. On being cajoled to attend a strange circus, he finds something crueller and more uncertain than his planned rendezvous. 'The Girl Who Could See The Wind' sees young Willow dragged halfway across the earth to an unfamiliar, Australia-esque country by a mother fearfully trying to escape her fate. But geographical distance proves no impediment to bonds of magical sacrifice, and Willow's mother's fear of a particular park suddenly becomes more than just one of her many irrational terrors. Willow's sister Rose and her mother disappear into the winter park, and accompanied by a pancake-eating policeman, Willow ventures after them into this realm where "another land is pushing through", guided by her ability to see things that other people cannot. In 'The Stranger', a script-writer who is unable to finish his stories follows a woman with eyes like blue diamonds, and finds an unexpected and eternal resolution to his problem with endings. The novella-length 'The Wolf Prince' is, in a manner not dissimilar to 'The Girl Who Could See The Wind', a story of mortals and immortals, the bonds between mothers and children, and those between women and men. A mortal woman

who was chosen and tested for the role of faerie princess searches in turn for a princess for her son. As the effects of a curse that plagues her boy increase, she begins to despair of finding a suitable woman to pass the required tests and lift the curse. In the final story, 'The Man Who Lost His Shadow', a man searches for a cure for his curious complaint, a journey which leads him into the recesses of a country where the people themselves seem to be shadows.

Themes of sacrifice and the choices we make for love run through the stories of this collection. The forms of love that prompt Carmody's character's choices are various – the love of mothers for children, between men and women, between friends, and even between strangers. While the reasons behind their decisions are not always made clear, there is an overriding sense of destiny that permeates their journeys and guides their actions. The locations of these stories shift evocatively between the real and the otherworldly, often drawing in aspects of the fantastic in a gradual fashion, so that the reader suddenly realises everything is strange without being able to pinpoint the shift between realms. These smooth transitions into the uncanny are effectively disconcerting, much more so than a concrete 'jump' between reality and fantasy.

Carmody's storytelling is leisurely and detailed, which perhaps is more suited to longer forms of writing, as in these short stories it often results in sudden explanatory speeches toward the end of the story that jar against her previous pace: "Had he dreamed it? Had it been a trick? He would never know the truth." Her tone varies markedly from story to story, from the innovative descriptions of 'Metro Winds': "So there was a girl. Young but not too young. As face as unformed as an egg, so that one could not tell if she would turn out to be fair or astonishingly ugly", to the more traditional fantasy fairy-telling cadences of 'The Wolf Prince'. There are welcome moments of humour in several of the stories, as in 'The Wolf Prince' where the mortal queen bemoans the domestic incompetence of her faerie king: "He forgot to conjure tea for me in the mornings unless I reminded him. If he slopped his supper wine, he would not wave a languid hand to spell it from the floor. He never thought to smooth our bed or pick up his underwear...it began to seem that he would rather use me than his magic."

My levels of engagement with the stories in this collection were significantly varied. While the two longest tales ('The Wolf Prince' and 'The Girl Who Could See The Wind') did eventually make me want to know how they ended, it was hard reading work to get to that point, several times in both stories I found I needed to stop and re-read from the beginning with fiercer concentration. While the moments of humour play around nicely with fairy-tale conventions, the inclusions of characters and plots from well-known fairy-tales (such as Rumpelstiltskin and Snow White & The Seven Dwarves) are a bit too familiar and overworked to evoke a pleasurable 'in-joke' reader response. Overall, while several of the stories are immediately engrossing and others ultimately rewarding, the collection as a whole is frustratingly uneven.

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## **Glaiza says**

'The death of a parent pulls away one half of the sky so that a weird light is cast upon all ordinary things.'  
~ The Girl Who Could See the Wind.

I am currently in awe of this book right now. The slow pull of each short story as it builds and transforms reality into fantasy is breathtaking. I love the details of each character's lives and their travels.

With a collection of really good stories, I usually have to put down the book after reading one. I'd still be inside the first story which is why I did not plunge through the whole collection at a break neck speed.



'Metro Winds' - blends a fairy tale-like atmosphere with an underground reality for a character who is just discovering her world. I liked how it was told from both the girl's and her aunt's perspectives. There are also hints of the Persephone myth.

'The Dove Game' - is told through the perspective of a young Aussie man who travels to Paris based on a dying man's wish. It featured one of the most haunting circus acts I've ever read. I could relate the most to Daniel, having lost a parent and searched for another place. It is almost like an unspoken rite of passage in Australia to go travel to somewhere new once you become an adult.

'The Girl Who Could See The Wind' - this story contains a mystery for the characters to unravel. I loved the alternative Victorian/19th century feel to it (though the time/place is never stated). I loved the ending and the way the fairy tale aspect to it is flipped and examined on its head.

'The Stranger' - moves from the modern setting of an airport to something raw, ancient and Gothic. It had one of the most powerful endings.

'The Wolf Prince' - also twists and examines the sacrifices made in fairy tales through the eyes of a mortal woman made into a faerie queen. Her character also reflects on both her past and present selves which is a transition that many people wonder over.

Finally, 'The Man Who Lost His Shadow' - is a story told from a character who feels detached from their world which seemed to mirror a loss he felt along with his shadow.

Needless to say, I recommend these stories to anyone.

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## **Stef Rozitis says**

I was very disappointed by this collection from a favourite author. I think the main reason was because throughout the book, just about the only consistent strain from story to story was an aggressively inevitable heterosexuality (sometimes defined by absence and shadow but nevertheless) where a woman's main narrative purpose (whether she is a main character or background) is to fulfil the purposes and desires of others through actually or symbolically being joined with a man (or in one case pierced by something other than a man in a particularly gory "coming of age". Women in the story achieve their identity through masochism and through fulfilment of "other" in some way and men are at times devoured or tainted by their connection with a woman but the whole thing is horribly inevitable and necessary in these stories.

Another disappointing feature was the "othering" that bordered on racism. The races/countries were not always named but there was a theme running through most stories of foreignness which without fail brought in exoticised and sometime savage overtones into the story and helped build the dark, foreboding atmosphere (the atmosphere itself was effectively rendered and possibly one of the strengths of the anthology).

Carmody builds her settings and the fantastical aspects of each story beautifully, these stories could probably be described as "gothic" and certainly fall on the dark side of fantasy (which will be enough for some readers I know). I felt that ultimately none of the stories really went anywhere- there was a careful construction and in each case the ending was a cliché or a let-down (the dove-game being the closest to almost going somewhere but the dove princess' story is not adequately made meaningful for the protagonist except in a

voyeuristic sense).

The wolf prince builds a compelling case that the whole inevitable patriarchy thing does not work (being a princess and the toy of an attentive but deeply clueless "prince") and seems to be moving toward showing the power and necessity of female networks but ultimately only so the next young, strong, courageous woman can be found as prey for the protagonist's son and become the trapped princess in turn. Women's existence in an unselfish other-orientation in this book really troubled me from a writer I had sometimes seen as "feminist".

If you want nothing more than a voyeuristic ghost-tour on the gothic side of the tracks then this book will delight you. If you want some substance or to move beyond stereotypes it will frustrate you consistently by tantalising glimpses of potential and a retreat back into a kind of existential despair. The only reason I am not depressed after reading is because the darkness was portrayed melodramatically enough not to be taken too seriously. Some parts of the book are recognisably Australian which I always enjoy.

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## **Melinda says**

### **Reread - April 2017**

I am bumping my rating up to 4 stars this time around.

Young Mel was wrong about this book. This time the stories that I didn't like much in 2013 were my favourite. I loved *The Girl Who Could See the Wind* and *The Wolf Prince*. Just as with *Green Monkey Dreams: Stories*, I no longer found these stories too complex. In fact, it was the complexity that I loved about these two stories. I loved the how rich the world was, despite them being short stories. I loved how real the characters were and how they were neither all good or all bad, but morally grey. I enjoyed how both romantic relationships and mother/child relationships was explored.

One of my favourite things about this book, and Carmody's writing in general, is how vivid the worlds are. I could picture the fantasy worlds in my head with great detail and when Carmody wrote about the real world, I could picture the cities and could guess at what city or country the stories took place when it wasn't explicitly stated. I also loved the way that Carmody wrote about Australia. It exacted from me a love for my country.

The only reason I didn't give this five stars was because of *The Man Who Lost His Shadow*. I didn't really connect with the story or get a sense of the main character and the ending felt abrupt. I felt like this could have been fleshed out a little more.

I am glad that I decided to reread this and I also really wish that some of the stories would be expanded into full series because the worlds fascinated me so much!

### **Original Review - February 2017**

The reason that this review is late is because I had so much trouble trying to finish this book. It was not that I didn't enjoy the book, I did, it is just that I found the last two stories really long winded, with not much happening in them. I really enjoyed this first four stories. All the stories were unique and interesting. They mostly dealt with otherworldly things such as unicorns, faeries and vampires and they were all definitely eye

opening.

Each story was complex in their own different ways, at times maybe a little too complex. With some of the stories I had trouble keeping up with what was happening, particularly in *The Girl Who Could See the Wind* and *The Wolf Prince*. In the case of those two stories I think that the problem was the constant flashbacks, without much warning that the time of the story had changed.

*The Wolf Prince* almost felt like there were two stories occurring in the one, because we would get flashbacks of the Queen's journey as well as the hunt her son was on. This was one of the reasons that I found it a bit complex. However I still had managed to guess roughly how the story was going to end, so I was a little disappointed about that. It was also one of the reasons why I had trouble finishing that story, because I felt like the Queen's flashbacks were a little unnecessary.

I really enjoyed *The Dove Game* and *The Stranger*. Both stories were about travellers who were both looking for the answer to a question. I enjoyed the mystery that surrounded the story of *The Dove Game*, and I also really liked the main character in that. I loved the mystique of *The Stranger*, with the feeling that there was something otherworldly involved from the beginning and then the ending was perfect for the story.

I did enjoy most of this book, but at times it was too complicated and a little slow. I give this book 3/5 stars.

Mel.

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## **Jessica says**

A fan of Carmody's short stories, but not of her more extended work (I could never get into the *Obernewtyn Chronicles*), I thoroughly enjoyed this collection of short stories.

It's a unique collection – instead of a series of very short stories as is popular in this genre, Carmody gifts us with a curated collection of six stories – no more. Most are fairly brief, however the two stories “*The Girl Who Could See the Wind*” and “*The Wolf Prince*” were a little longer, almost mini novellas in the collection. These two stand out as well, substantially deeper than the others in this collection and are easily my favourites. I truly believe Carmody is best when she restricts her stories to smaller, more concise constructions. She develops characters easily and quickly, and her plots are just as convoluted and intriguing as in a full novel - but there is overall a simpler and unassuming tone that perfectly conveys her visions.

It is popular now to retell or attempt to recreate fairy tales. Carmody does this very well throughout the book. At times, she makes some subtle (and not-so-subtle) references to modern culture and darker gothic works, but for the most part she is adept at weaving existing myths and conventions of the folk and fairy tale genre into new and intriguing tales. Compared to *Green Monkey Dreams: Stories*, I think Carmody's matured as a writer and mastered a style that is popular, but timeless.

A common motif throughout these stories is the popular tropes of fairy-abduction genres – which she squarely averts when necessary, but she is equally unafraid to follow their natural course with a little careful manipulation. Her characters are flawed yet powerful, and even the bit roles given to unassuming supporting characters are nuanced and hint at the picture she is yet to paint. It's a real triumph of intertextuality; the plots of each tale are alternatively dark and light, with elements of the gothic, hints at steam/alt historical fantasy, and are riddled with archetypal elements that speak to a broad range of readers.

