



A month of Sundays

By Liz Byrski

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Genre & subject

Female friendship -- Fiction

Women -- Fiction

Domestic Fiction

Synopsis

For over ten years, Ros, Adele, Judy and Simone have been in an online book club, but they have never met face to face. Until now. Determined to enjoy her imminent retirement, Adele invites her fellow bibliophiles to help her house-sit in the Blue Mountains. It's a tantalising opportunity to spend a month walking in the fresh air, napping by the fire and, of course, reading and talking about books. But these aren't just any books: each member has been asked to choose a book which will teach the others more about her. And with each woman facing a crossroads in her life, it turns out there's a lot for them to learn, not just about their fellow book-clubbers, but also about themselves.

Author biography

Elizabeth Ann Byrski (born 3 February 1944 in London) is an Australian writer and journalist.

After graduating from Notre Dame Convent in Lingfield, Surrey, in 1960, Byrski furthered her education at the Crawley College of Further Education (1960–61) and the Wall Hall College of Education (1973–74). Her first job was as a secretary at a pest control firm in Sussex. Her journalism career began when she started as a journalist in 1962 on the Horley Advertiser (part of Surrey Mirror Newspapers), in Horley, Surrey. She moved to Australia in 1981

As a freelance journalist Byrski's work has appeared in the Australian Financial Review, The West Australian, The Australian, The Age, the San Francisco Chronicle, the San Francisco Examiner, and The Dominion (Wellington, NZ), Homes and Living, New Idea, Cosmopolitan, SkyWest In-Flight, Building Magazine, and Portfolio.

In 1988 to 1990 and from 1993 to 1996 she was a broadcaster and executive producer at ABC 720 6WF in Perth.[3] This period included co-presenting the Grapevine program with then-television newsreader Peter Holland. She was also an occasional book reviewer for the ABC.

In 1987 she was a panelist on the daily Channel 7 program Beauty and the Beast.

She has won several awards for her journalism, including the Radio Prize at the 1996 WA Media Awards and the CSIRO WA Award for Excellence in Science Journalism.

From 1983 to 1989 she wrote the weekly Viewpoint column in Perth's Community Newspapers group.

Discussion starters

- Which character did you identify with the most? Why? Which character do you think is the most likeable?
- Although told from multiple perspectives, do you think there's a main character? If so, who, and why?
- While all four women form a close friendship as a group, we can see that Ros and Simone have their own unique relationship, as do Judy and Adele. Particularly in the case of Ros and Simone who are perhaps the most perceptibly different in personality, why and how do you think these pairings occurred?
- 'I think he'll be fine, she says, talking silently to James as she frequently does. It's a relief, I hate the idea of having to organise a new tenant again, but he seems easy and Leah wouldn't have sent me a dud.' (p.6). What do you think the purpose and significance of Ros' conversations with James are to our understanding of Ros as a character, and also to the narrative itself?
- A lot can be said of a novel's setting playing as significant a role as a character within the story. How true do you think this is of the Blue Mountains in the story? Does it play a significant role? Could the story have taken place in any environment to the same effect?
- 'So much seems to have shifted since then. I've changed, she thinks. Just being here with these three women has changed me.' (p.201). What do you think are the main contributing factors that have allowed these women to come away from this experience so changed?
- What do you think of the waiter's remark, "Enjoy your meal, girls," he says with a big grin. "All on a diet, are we?" (p.273), to which Ros responds, "Just sod off, you fatuous, sexist twit"? Was it an overreaction and an example of political correctness gone mad? Or was Ros' response warranted?
- 'It's not so long ago that she would have done that without thinking twice, but today she'd come face to face with the fear of her own vulnerability.' (Ros, p.280). Inextricably tied to their questions of identity is a sense of vulnerability. How significant a factor do you think vulnerability plays in all their lives? What are their vulnerabilities?
- When Judy confesses to Ros that she feels detached from the news of Maddie's death, Ros hits upon an interesting concept of 'emotional conservation', that is, 'conserving motional energy. Saving it for ourselves and for people whom we're really close to.' (p.242). What do you think of this concept? Is it universal? Is it a healthy coping mechanism?

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