



Leap

Myfanwy Jones

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A few weeks after finishing their final exams high school sweethearts have an argument at a party. Joe wants to go - Jen begs him to stay. They fight in the corridor, following their usual script, and then he walks out and leaves her. A few hours later she dies.

Three years on, after burning up his own dreams for the future, Joe is working in dead-end jobs and mentoring a wayward teenager not dissimilar from his younger self. Driven by the need to make good, he spends all his spare time doing parkour under an inner-city bridge, training his mind and body to conquer the hostile urban environment that took his love and blighted his future.

Somewhere else, a middle-aged woman, Elise, is treading water in her life as her marriage breaks up. We watch as she retreats to the only place that holds any meaning for her - the tiger enclosure at Melbourne Zoo, where, for reasons she barely understands, she starts painting the tigers and forms a close connection to them.

Joe is broken by grief, but the outside world won't let him hide forever. A cool and bewitching girl turns up on the doorstep of his share house, somehow painfully familiar to him. Then there is the skateboarding chef at the bar where he works, the girl with the Cossack-blue eyes, who wants to be his friend. And someone going by the Facebook tag Emily Dickinson wants to reminisce about his dead girlfriend and won't leave him alone.

Can Joe staunch the flooding return of desire - or is it time to let go of the past? And will he make the nine-foot leap from girder to pillar or does he want to fall too?

While at its heart is a searing absence, Leap is driven by an unstoppable and exhilarating life force, and the eternally hopeful promise of redemptive love. Funny, moving, quirky and original, Leap is an effortlessly enjoyable novel that quietly creeps up on you until its final jaw-dropping pages and a narrative twist that will take your breath away.

Leap Details

Date : Published June 1st 2015 by Allen & Unwin (first published 2015)

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Author : Myfanwy Jones

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From Reader Review Leap for online ebook

Carolyn says

This was a gorgeous book to listen to as an audio book. The language was so rich and evocative and the narration by Samuel Johnson was superb. He had exactly the right tone of Aussie tone and pitch that suited the characters.

This is a story of loss and grief and the slow road to survival and recovery. Three years ago at the end of high school Joe lost his first love, Jen in an accident after they had had a row and he had stormed home. He is still trying to overcome the grief and the guilt and move on with his life. Sharing a house with two mates he works in cafes and bars and pushes himself at the street sport of parkour trying to achieve more and more difficult feats.

Across town Elise, a middle aged woman is struggling with her own grief and breakdown of her marriage. She is addicted to watching the tigers at the zoo and starts to sketch them and dream about them. Eventually both Elise and Joe must both find the courage to allow the rawness of the past to be melded into their histories and move on with their lives.

I loved the depth of feeling that Myfanwy Jones was able to invoke in both a young man and a middle aged woman struggling with grief. The very real lives of all the young people in the story resounded off the pages - Joe's mates, Sanjay and Jack, Lena the Ukrainian cook who works with Joe and Deck the troubled young boy who Joe mentors. The imagery of the tigers in Joe's and Elise's lives brings a bit of magic to the story and there is also much humour and in the end a feeling of hope and optimism.

I especially loved the final words of the novel as Joe finally lets go and moves on:

"And maybe no trick he pulls off is ever going to bring her back but this one-it's for her. He is going to make a perfect landing.

Breathes: One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Leaps"

With many thanks to Myfanwy Jones for an audio copy of the book.

Lesley Moseley says

Took about 20 pages to get the gist of the different rhythms and pace of the two main threads. Then I raced around Brunswick, Melbourne with the young parkour practitioner, and crept cat-like , with the other main Character, an older woman. Once I 'got it', I was awed by the skill of the underwritten , huge story.

Elaine says

What an absolutely gorgeous book. One that gets right into your soul. And what a talented writer. The emotions and reactions expressed here were so real and heartfelt. This book felt so familiar to me and not just because it is set in my hometown and I was able to recognise many of the landmarks and places mentioned. Reading about these people and hearing their story really resonated with me and I felt a sense of connection. Like I knew them personally and I could relate to their experiences. I actually feel a little forlorn

now that I am finished and won't get to spend anymore time in Joe and Elise's world. I'm so glad this book crossed my path and although it was a distraction from my other reads it was a welcome one. Finally a read worthy of five stars. I would not hesitate to recommend this book. In fact I've already passed it on.

Helen King says

There were some lovely scenes within this novel, and the author has described parts of inner Melbourne beautifully. The two story lines came together well, and the mutual sufferings that the two characters suffered were well described. There were some endearing characters too. Having said that - I didn't love this novel. It felt a bit contrived to me - particularly the way the two threads were brought together. I wanted to love it. But I didn't. Still glad I read it, and thanks to Allen and Unwin for providing me with a proof copy.

??Jülie ? says

Leap by Myfanwy Jones

Joe has a part time job working night shift in a bar...

“He likes this part of the night: stage set, players yet to walk on. He likes stirring up the stale but ever-expectant air—sorry and glad in equal measure that hopes for transcendence are rarely met. There will be an exchange of bread and wine for money and then people will go back to their workaday lives.”

Such beautiful evocative writing, it's like listening to poetry.

I started reading this book whilst at the same time listening to the audio version, (the audio whilst I was doing other things) and I have to say that Samuel Johnson's narration of this story perfectly matches the voice I first heard in my head when reading it myself...he does a fantastic job of it, pulling the listener right into the scene.

I was glad that I read it in this way as it got me more involved in the story and guaranteed that I missed nothing in the translation.

This is a very poignant story of loss and love, of desire, yearning and longing. Of trying to find ways of coming to terms with those states of being without compromising the necessity to experience them fully. It is as though the players need to identify that constant ache for what it is and suffer it accordingly...especially Joe.

Joe has been in a perpetual state of numb limbo for the three years since Jen, his girlfriend and soulmate, died suddenly one night after they had argued and he walked out, leaving her stranded at a party which he had no desire to be at anyway.

Normally he wouldn't have behaved in this way, he would have easily given in to her needs, because the prospect of being upset with her is unbearable, because they are like that with each other, they can never get enough.

But tonight was different and Joe was in no mood to back down, he didn't want to stay any longer at that party.

Now he is consumed with the loss of her and the void in him, which is all that remains of her, and him.

We watch, and vicariously experience the darkness he inhabits, and the torment and anguish which besets Joe and the people that are close to him, and close to Jen...the slow unravelling of tightly knitted emotions...the collateral damage, of broken people.

This is a beautifully written book which takes the reader right inside the very depths of its characters' emotions and affords a deeply personal view of the various extents of their individual sufferings. Yet for all that, it is uplifting in its casual observation of the nature of people, and often funny in its depictions of those.

So glad I read this, and would highly recommend it. 4★s

Many thanks to the author for providing me with an audio copy.

Michael Livingston says

A lovely, sad book about grief and recovery, obsession and friendship. I'm a sucker for books set in and around the inner north of Melbourne, so I was always likely to be sympathetic to Leap, but Jones has done a wonderful job of drawing out her characters - particularly the three young men. I wasn't entirely convinced by the intersection of the two threads of the story, but the stories worked really beautifully on their own.

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

Leap by Myfanwy Jones is a sharply observed story of grief and guilt and the struggle to move on from loss.

Three years after the tragic death of his girlfriend, Joe is still wallowing in guilt. Unable to re-imagine his future without her, he simply aims to stay busy, working two dead end jobs, and running through the darkened streets of Melbourne, leaping any obstacles in his way.

Elsewhere, Elise's marriage is falling apart and her work is uninspiring, mournful and lonely, she is drawn to the beauty and violence of the tigers housed at the Melbourne Zoo.

In Leap, Jones has created two very different characters deeply affected by their respective losses, angry, heart broken and plagued by inertia they are unable to move forward with their own lives.

So Joe is challenged by the slow return of his desire for life. Moving on feels like a betrayal, but his punishing routine of parkour and work is no longer as satisfying as it once was given his attraction to his newest housemate, an enigmatic nurse. He is further challenged by the charm of his blue-eyed workmate, the ailing health of his Uncle and the needs of the young troubled teen he mentors.

Meanwhile the listlessness pressing on Elise is finally pierced when her husband announces he is leaving her. She escapes, not unhappily, to the home of her best friend for a few weeks and on her return home immerses herself in her obsession with the tigers at the zoo, enjoying being unaccountable to anyone but herself. Alone, she is finally able to confront her resentment and grief, to mourn her lost daughter on her own terms.

While I struggled a little with the narrative initially, which is shared between the two characters and moves between the past and present, I soon settled into the rhythm of the story. The emotion is powerful, yet the

story is not without humour. The prose is thoughtful and genuine.

Well written, Leap is a moving novel.

"And maybe no trick he pulls off is ever going to bring her back but this one-it's for her. He is going to make a perfect landing.

Breathes: One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Leaps"

Ace says

A beautifully narrated book about the struggling young Joe and older woman Elise, both of who are experiencing grief in their own quiet ways. Joe is surrounded by a little group of friends and relatives that love him to death. He is a great guy who I would have loved to have known myself (in my younger days). I would have fallen for him for sure. He suffers from the very tragic and unfortunate loss of his girlfriend Jen a few years ago and has turned to a dangerous and exhilarating sport of leaping across buildings, rooftops and leaping to superhuman heights. He does this in the quiet of the early hours of the morning after he finishes working his shift as a waiter. At the same time, Elise is going through similar emotional turmoil and keeps returning to the tigers at Melbourne Zoo with which she seems to have some connection. I thought initially that she was Jen's (Joe's girlfriend) mother and that the connection was between Joe, Jen and the tigers and Elise. It's literary fiction, I won't try to analyse it as I am not that smart, but needless to say that the writing was evocative and I love tigers, so I enjoyed these chapters as much as those about Joe. A great setting and familiar to me, a great short book I thoroughly enjoyed.

Marianne says

"It had to end—the memorialising and group hugs. Because while their friends were devastated they were also glad it had not been them. In part, in those early days, they were rejoicing. They were only human. Jen's absence called attention to the miracle of their own mortal breath misting the mirror"

Leap is the second fiction book by Australian author, Myfanwy Jones. Three years after the death of his girlfriend, Joe seems to be merely marking time: ambitions of teaching sports abandoned, he works in a bar and a café, lives behind a laundrette, spends his spare time perfecting parkour moves, mentoring a wilful teenager and avoiding all mention of his loss.

As they lie on the "man roof" watching the stars, Joe and his flatmates, Jack and Sanjay, examine their lives, loves and careers. Joe's uncle Todd is determined to somehow draw him back into living; Lena, the chef at the bar wants to know him better; an attractive nurse turns up to rent the spare room; and just who is this Emily Dickinson, persistently chatting to him on Facebook about his Jen? His Jen who "...liked being at his house more than her own: the freedom of it, the lack of supervision. She could play at being an adult. At her house, he realised later--after--he got to be a child".

Elise, in her late forties, is also trying to cope with grief: her marriage to Adam seems to be failing, her adult son is distant and her graphic design work has lost appeal. The high point of her life is a weekly visit to the tiger enclosure at the zoo, and she finds herself drawn, not just to observing these magnificent creatures, but to exhuming her paints from storage and capturing them on canvas. She muses: "Tiger mother: teeth that crush femurs like breadsticks carry mewling cubs without breaking skin; mace-like paws employed in gentle cavorting. That excoriating tongue applied lightly to baby fur. Perfect strength meets perfect love"

Jones gives the reader a very familiar setting: she conveys that Melbourne feel with consummate ease. Her characters are, for the most part, appealing, realistically flawed, often amusing and occasionally quirky. The banter between the flatmates is snappy, witty and funny. Her plot is original and wrapped in some beautiful prose. Her characters demonstrate the many different ways that people are affected by grief, and how they learn to cope. And Leap has a gorgeous, evocative cover. Some readers may be a bit disgruntled with the ending because it is somewhat indefinite, but it also holds great possibility and promise, and reveals a few clever twists that only the most astute readers will predict. This is a heart-warming novel: moving, funny and uplifting. A great read.

With thanks to Good Reads First Reads for this copy to read and review.

Odette says

This is a very thought provoking and contemporary read, bordering on YA. There are two main parallel story lines about Joe and his friends and Elsie and Sam. The theme running through both is the death of a young person and the length of and impact of grief on the lives of her family and friends.

It took me a little while to get into this book due to the two story lines and different characters involved in each. The imagery involving tigers portrayed in hobbies/pastimes is very vibrant. I could relate well to the characters portrayed and the setting in Melbourne.

I enjoyed reading this book and highly recommend it.

Carol - Reading Writing and Riesling says

My View:

Myfanwy Jones writes this narrative with finesse and gentleness, Samuel Johnson narrates this engaging story of love, friendship, loss and grief with aplomb. It was pure pleasure listening to this story; the prose was lyrical, the images of the zoo and the tiger enclosure were mesmerising and the stories in the individual character strands were interesting and worked well together to complete a picture of how we react to loss - of identity, loss of physical capacity, loss of romantic love, loss of a child, loss of a relationship. There was even a hint of mystery thrown in for good measure - and I was surprised when the mystery was revealed - I did not pick up any clues to this reveal.

Buy the book or listen to the audio version – you will slowly and gently be guided into this story that ends with a note of optimism.

Jenny says

Without a doubt this is one of the best books I have read this year. One that will stay with me. A book one needs to stick at the beginning but it is so worth it. Complex in themes and subject but written effortlessly, cleverly and beautifully. The title is just so apt, so perfect as each character discovers their own way to leap forward by experiencing their own sadness and heartache and finding the place to share it, to admit to it and then park it in the right spot.

The need to protect and save tigers, capturing their majesty and beauty underpins and weaves throughout (is)

the storyline.

My favourite reference to this aspect is "they say tigers have exceptional memories, recalling significantly more, and for longer, than humans can. Perhaps these caged cats collectively remember being free: climbing trees, swimming rivers, tendering death. And perhaps a trip to see their wild cousins in India is not such a crazy idea. She has a credit card. If only she could pack Indrah in her suitcase"

Trudie says

One more book off my 2016 Miles Franklin reading list and I still haven't found "the one".

Leap started out with some promise. All moody Melbourne streets at dawn, laneways, hipster cafes, a lean parkour-loving 20 something male. A middle aged artist who likes tigers and an Unidentified Tragedy which seemed not likely to be quickly revealed. I settled in.

However, this quickly came to feel like something written during a writers workshop where topics were pulled randomly from a hat.

Jones you got "Tigers" and "Parkour" and a central theme of "grief" - would be good if you could work in sex with an unnamed nurse character especially while they are both leaping pillars ...goodluck

Obviously, by these comments this book strained credibility for me which is not always a concern if the writer can make me forgive them in other ways but despite loving how well this conquered up my beloved Melbourne the story had an unfortunate feeling of contrivance.

I had serious problems with some of the dialogue, pushing too hard to get urban 20-somethings just right. The preponderance of ipad usage started to feel like product placement.

Despite these misgivings I think there is something here to enjoy, the descriptions of the city charmed me, I liked the Parkour and it made me seek out some eye-popping videos which set a nice visual tone for those descriptions in the novel. There are nice foodie scenes which I always appreciate.

Summary : Its ok ? Its not memorable. I am damming with faint praise now.

Black Rock White City is all up to you to redeem this years list for me ;)

Karys McEwen says

I want to marry this book and snuggle it at night and cherish it forever. What a smashing story, with so much heart and ALL the emotions packed into a little parcel with a beautiful cover. I whizzed through Leap today, and my brain hurts a bit from not looking up from the pages to give my eyes a rest . I literally missed my train this morning, because I was so caught up in the lives of Joe and Elise and their various comrades (from a wayward teen, to a Ukrainian chef, a Bollywood-loving housemate, one who got away, and tigers trapped in a zoo). Set in the present day in Melbourne, this unfussy and wholehearted novel explores love, grief and everything in between through the eyes of a young no-hoper with a love for parkour, and a middle-aged graphic designer whose husband barely acknowledges her (and vice versa). Joe and Elise have both suffered

through an unfathomable loss before the beginning of the first page, and their journey towards closure is brilliantly written. There were lines and paragraphs in every chapter that brought up all kinds of gut-wrenching feelings for me. A touching story with plenty of ups and downs, and a narrative twist that you'll love even if you predict. Everyone should read Leap, immediately. Five stars from me!

Read more on my blog: [Middle Chapter](#)

Andrea says

4.5★; so close to 5 it's not funny, but in the end I didn't think it had the hallmarks of a 'classic' read for me. Let's be clear though - I loved it.

Joe is still grieving the death of his girlfriend a few years ago. He holds himself pretty tight - doesn't drink, works all the waking hours of the day and night, no romantic entanglements - except for the physical and mental release he experiences when practising his self-taught parkour. That is, until a nurse comes knocking on the door asking about the spare room.

Elise, a graphic designer, is also grieving, and she doesn't do it the same way as her husband, so this has gradually caused a deep rift in their marriage. Every Thursday at 11am, Elise goes to the tiger enclosure at the zoo to observe the big cats for an hour. Nothing weird about that - except that it's her guilty secret, and even Elise doesn't really understand why. She dusts off her tubes of paint and uses her art to see where this obsession will take her.

There are a handful of other significant characters in this story, but the one I loved the most was Inner Melbourne. I mean to say that for me, the location of this story was so exquisitely captured that it was like a character to me - one I know and love in real life. From Fitzroy to St Kilda to the exact spot on Russell St that I just *know* the author was referring to, it was perfect.

If I had realised this book was Melbourne+tigers+parkour I would not have let it languish on my bookshelf for so long!
