

About the Author

Margo Lanagan has worked as a kitchen hand and encyclopedia seller and spent ten years as a freelance book editor. She is now a technical writer as well as a creative one. While Ms. Lanagan has written six books for children and young adults, all published in her home country of Australia, *Black Juice* marks her entrance into the North American book world. *Black Juice* was acclaimed by the American Library Association, which awarded it a 2006 Michael L. Printz Honor Award for excellence in young adult literature. Ms. Lanagan lives in Sydney, Australia, with her partner and their two sons.

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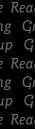
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Every story in BLACK DUGF is ich, strange, wonderful, and compelling. Margo Lanagan is n enormoduly talented and killful writer." -GARTH NIX, New York Times best-selling uthor of ABHORSEN

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Black Juice By Margo Lanagan



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About Black Juice

The unforgettable characters in these ten fantasy short stories possess much-needed courage as they encounter conflicts with their environment and other individuals and journey through unusual situations and events. Set in both familiar and unknown cultures, these tales illustrate the darker side of human nature, but also reveal how the loyalty and love of family members and friends can help ease the pain life so often brings.

Meet Ikky and her family, who celebrate life as Ikky is sentenced to die in the tar pits for killing her husband. Get to know Berry and understand his confusion with his lord, who demonstrates the importance of seeing the best in people, even when they don't deserve it. Participate in the killing spree with Jelly and his friend as they recklessly pick off one bouffon after another. Join the trained herd of elephants while they search for and rescue the mahout who was taken from them. Run away with Dot to escape the stifling oppression of Bard Jo. Get lost with Matty on her way to the church to be married. Search for an angel with a young boy who is trying to save his Nan's life. Remember the good times Daphne had with her grandmother as Daphne travels to her funeral. Witness the devastation of a village destroyed by yowlinins. And climb to the top of a mountain through dangerous winds with the "thick" boy in a sacred robe, so he can recite the ancient incantations that begin new life. Margo Lanagan's characters invite you, the reader, to experience and observe the richness of life, "in ten short stories, ten haunting and unique worlds."

"Nothing short of brilliant."—Locus

General Discussion Questions

The titles of these short stories all hint at the corresponding context or theme. Discuss each title and its significance to the story.

Loyalty is a predominate theme throughout the book.

- How does the theme of loyalty relate to each story?
- What other themes evolve in these stories?

Discussion Questions

Singing My Sister Down

Ikky's family celebrates her death in a way that helps ease their grief. Ikky's mother is even willing to risk her own life to ease her daughter's death (p. 8). Why does Ikky tell her mother she doesn't have to do so? Why is Ikky put to death? Why does Ikky's death bring shame to her entire family?

My Lord's Man

Berry cannot understand why his lord does not kill his wife for running off with the gypsies. What do the wife's actions say about her character? What does Mullord see in his wife that neither she nor Berry sees? What does it say about Mullord's character that he can see the good in his wife when no one else can?

Red Nose Day

Jelly is excited about killing the bouffons and makes plans to destroy them slowly over time. Jelly says he wants to kill until he has a "warm, fuzzy feeling" (p. 44). Why does Jelly react the way he does when he discovers that he has killed his twin brothers? What was his motivation for the killings? How was his motivation different than that of his friend who actually pulled the trigger?

Sweet Pippit

Who is Pippit? Why are the elephants willing to risk their own lives and way of existence to save him? How does Booroondoon rally the herd and help them overcome their fear? Why do the people want Pippit dead? Where does Pippit take the elephants after they rescue him?

House of the Many

When Dot returns home and finds his sister dead and his mother confused, Winsome says to him, "You shouldn't have gone. You were the only one he could have handed on to, who wasn't blood-related, who wouldn't have caused quarrels" (p. 128). What would the Bard have handed to Dot? Does this have anything to do with the reason Dot left? Why or why not? Why did Bard Jo become so bitter and angry?

Wooden Bride

Why does Matty decide to go through the Lanes district instead of going directly to the church? Once Matty realizes she is lost and will not be at the church in time for the ceremony, why does she refuse to run (p. 153)? In the end, does Matty achieve her goal? Why or why not?

Earthly Uses

Angry and belligerent, Pa hates the angels, so why does he send for one when Nan is dying? What makes Nan sick enough to die? Why does the angel make provision for the boy to escape from his grandfather? The angels are foul in most every way imaginable, so is their presence more positive than negative? Why or why not?

Perpetual Light

In order to attend her grandmother's funeral, Daphne makes sacrifices and takes a risk with her seeds. Is her trip to Greville worth the sacrifice? Irini tells Daphne her grandmother reminisced about the time they spent together, contemplating how the world had changed. What are the changes that Daphne's grandmother witnessed? How does Daphne attempt to keep some of the old ways alive?

Yowlinin

Mr. Harrow calls the narrator a "yowlinin-toy" (p. 223). Who is the narrator, and what happens to her to make her such an outcast? Why doesn't anyone believe her when she tells them she sees a dormer beetle? She dreams of being special to the Harrow boy, but what occurs that allows her to comprehend that she will never be loved by him or anyone else?

Rite of Spring

On page 243, the "thick" boy says, "Don't they realize I'm not made of the same stuff?" What "stuff" do his mother and brother possess that he thinks he doesn't have? How does he prove this belief wrong? What attributes does the "thick" boy possess that his mother and brother do not?

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