

# Books by the Stack



## **Fates and Furies by Lauren Groff**

Every story has two sides. Every relationship has two perspectives. And sometimes, it turns out, the key to a great marriage is not its truths but its secrets. At age twenty-two, Lotto and Mathilde are tall, glamorous, madly in love, and destined for greatness. A decade later, their marriage is still the envy of their friends, but with an electric thrill we understand that things are even more complicated and remarkable than they have seemed.

**Why you'll like it:** *Domestic fiction, flawed, introspective, intricately plotted, high-drama.*

**About the Author:** Lauren Groff graduated from Amherst College and received an MFA in fiction from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Her books include *The Monsters of Templeton*, *Delicate Edible Birds*, and *Fates and Furies*. *Arcadia* won of the Medici Book Club Prize. Her fiction has also won the Paul Bowles Prize for Fiction, the PEN/O. Henry Award, and the Pushcart Prize. Her work has appeared in numerous magazines including the *New Yorker*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *Tin House*, *One Story*, *McSweeney's*, and *Ploughshares*, and in the anthologies *100 Years of the Best American Short Stories*, *The Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses*, *PEN/O. Henry Prize Stories*, and three editions of the *Best American Short Stories*. (Bowker Author Biography)

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. *Fates and Furies* is told in halves. Why do you think Groff chose to narrate the story this way? How did the split storytelling affect your reading of the book? Might it be symbolic characters' inner lives?
2. Why is Lancelot connected with the "Fate" chapter? How would you describe his personality – do you consider him passive, optimistic (unreasonably so?), fair-minded and accepting? Is he humble or egotistical?
3. How do Mathilde's early years – in particular, its tragedy – shape the path of her life/ Is fate to blame for her ruthlessness? If so, why is she associated with the "Furies" chapter rather than the "Fates" chapter?
4. How would you describe Mathilde's character? In what way is she different, even the opposite of, Lotto?
5. This is a book about a marriage. But the author tackles far broader issues – to what extent do early experiences shape character and life events? What really constitutes such things as "good fortune"? How well can you truly understand to life of someone close to us?
6. Consider Mathilde's final decision – to keep her past a secret for so many years. Do you think about whether this lie was truly for the best; could they have been happy if Mathilde had told Lotto everything? Why do you think she kept this information to herself?
7. How much do you know about classical mythology, especially the Fates and the Furies? Who are they in Greek mythology?

- 8.** In what way does the early tragedy in Lotto's life draw him to Mathilde? And vice versa – what attracts Mathilde to Lotto? How would you describe the early stages of their love and marriage? Are cracks visible at the beginning...or is it all smoothness and perfection?
- 9.** Mathilde's relationship with Ariel is abusive. What does Ariel's presence in the story say about Mathilde's natural impulse toward revenge? Why is her reaction to her experience with Ariel directed at other characters?
- 10.** *Fates and Furies* spans a long period of time. Chronologically, the plot is very complex, though there is a central focus on Lotto and Mathilde. How do Lotto and Mathilde change over the years, together and apart? Do you think they have a happy marriage?
- 11.** Do you think the ending was appropriate? How would you have like to have seen the ending go?
- (questions provided by publisher, litlovers.com and book-chatter.com)*



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