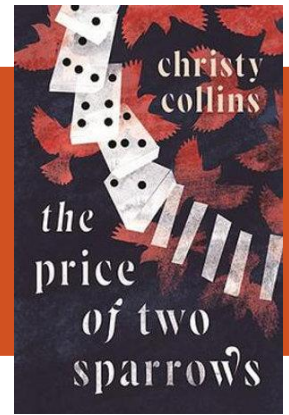




# The Price of Two Sparrows

Christy Collins



## Author Background

Christy Collins has worked in academic research in the fields of child health, sustainability, and commuter behaviour. Her novella *The End of Seeing* was one of the winners of the Viva La Novella Prize 2015 and is published by Seizure. It was shortlisted for the Colin Roderick Award and the Writing Australia Unpublished Manuscript Prize and long-listed for the Vogel. She has a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Tasmania and was a 2017 Asialink Arts Resident in Sapporo, Japan. She lives in Melbourne.

## Book Summary

Heico is an ornithologist fighting a losing battle to protect the birds in his beachside suburb. When a journalist asks for comment on a planned development, Heico exaggerates his reports on how many migratory birds use the site. Soon it is revealed that the proposed building is a mosque, and he finds himself embroiled in community resistance to the project. Still, he refuses to back down.

Nahla, Heico's house cleaner, is trying to find her place in a new country and a new marriage. Isolated and lonely, she sees the mosque as a symbol of what she hopes to find in Australia: community, familiarity, acceptance. But as resistance to the project intensifies, she must summon the courage and the language to claim her space in this new life.

When asked about where the inspiration for this book came from Christy Collins said: "In 2012 I was on a study program looking at religious pluralism in the United States and I heard the story of a mosque development delayed in part due to concerns about the flight path of a particular migratory bird. The people who told me the story felt this concern was spurious and that the evidence was slight. I couldn't stop thinking about this story and the various characters involved."

## Discussion Questions

- ❖ What do you think of the book's title? How does it relate to the book's contents? What other title might you choose?
- ❖ What do you think the author's purpose was in writing this book? What ideas was she trying to get across?
- ❖ What do you think of the author's use of simile, metaphor, and literary references? What effect do they have on the story and relationship between characters?
- ❖ A central theme in the book is the question of belonging. How well do you think the author has been able to present multiple perspectives on belonging?
- ❖ The book is set in a specific time in Australian history. How did you feel reliving the debates of the time? Do you think that we are now seeing signs of understanding and tolerance in our society or are we more polarised than we were then?
- ❖ What did you come away with at the end of book?

## References

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- ❖ Australian Book Review, April 2021, No. 430, "Four New Novels"