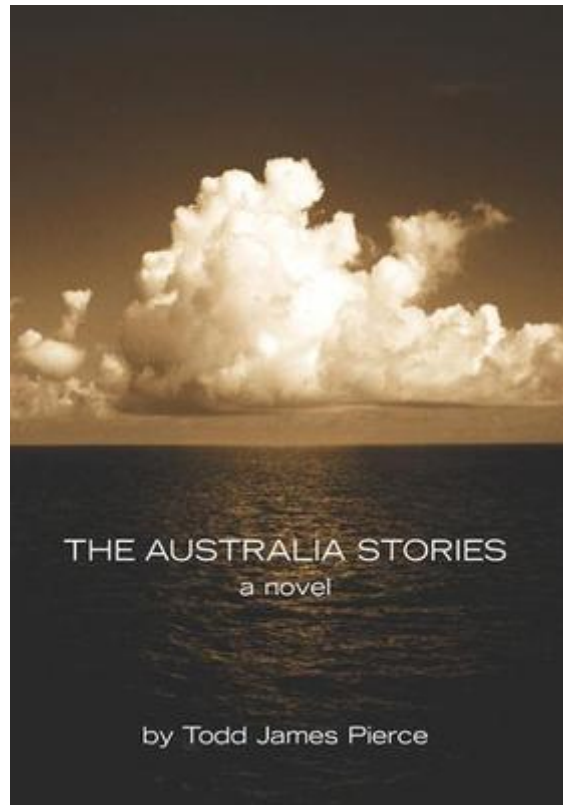


The Australia Stories - Todd Pierce



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Haunted by the deaths of his mother and grandmother, both of whom perished while hiking through Australia's Blue Mountains, Sam Browne returns to the country of his mother's birth in search of his family's history and a way to make a place for himself within it. By reading his grandmother's memoirs, Sam begins to connect to his family's ancestral home and understand the reasons that she and her daughter after her were so drawn to the Australian landscape and the mystery found there. Drawing upon Australian culture and Aborigine mythology, *The Australia Stories* captures the strong hold that a place can have upon a person and the way a family's legacy can live on in the present. About the Author Todd James Pierce was raised in California and is a graduate of UC Irvine's MFA program and of Florida State's Ph.D. program. His short stories and other writings have been included in more than fifty magazines and journals nationwide, including *The Missouri Review*, *The North American Review*, *Fiction*, *Shenandoah*, and *The Indiana Review*. He has lived in Australia and now resides with his wife in Tallahassee, Florida. *The Australia Stories* is his first novel. From the author *The Australia Stories* is the story of Sam Browne's family-his famous grandmother who goes missing while hiking across the Outback

and his mother who tries to fill the space left in her wake. But for me the novel began one spring afternoon when I was in Sydney with a friend and his grandfather, Mr. May. I'd just graduated from college and was teaching high school in Australia. After lunch we walked down to the water, right by the Harbour Bridge. We stood there a long time, the spring sun slanting down on us, and I noticed how Mr. May kept looking up at the bridge, the skin crinkling at the corners of his eyes. That bridge was a beautiful structure, a large steel arch spanning the harbor. Locals called it "The Coat Hanger" because of its shape. Mr. May told me something then that I'd never known: when he was a young man, during the Depression, he'd helped build that bridge, first with quarry work and later by carrying tools for men who were experienced in welding. I never forgot the way he looked at it, the longing visible in his face, and I never forgot what he said, "It'll be here long after I'm gone." I carried that day with me for a long time because I understood he was contemplating something I'd never considered: what it means to have a full life and what it means to leave it. Eventually Mr. May became my inspiration for the character Gregory, and eventually I understood that Gregory was married to one of my heroines, the woman who disappeared in the Outback. Gregory and his wife had children, and their children had children, one of whom turned out to be Sam Browne, the narrator of this book. It wasn't until the following year, until I'd written the first two sections, that I learned my novel would be a love story as well.

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