

Awards and praise for *The Flywheel*

Winner of the Ampersand Prize

Shortlisted for the CBCA Book of the Year: Older Readers

‘[*The Flywheel*’s] got what I love in novels; great characters, relationships, a strong funny voice and a great sense of place.’

– Melina Marchetta, author of *Looking for Alibrandi*

‘Gough’s book is tough and textured, and it doesn’t shy away from exploring the acute awkwardness that comes with trusting your true self to others.’ – *Sydney Morning Herald*

Awards and praise for *Amelia Westlake*

Winner of the NSW Premier’s Literary Awards: Ethel Turner Prize for Young People’s Literature

Winner of the Readings Young Adult Book Prize

A CBCA Notable Book

‘Witty, warm and deliciously subversive.’

– Melissa Keil, author of *Life in Outer Space*

‘An adorable love story, plus a feminist plot to take down institutionalised misogyny at a stuffy prep school ... Yes please. I loved everything about this book.’ – Sarah Watson, creator of

The Bold Type and author of *Most Likely*

‘Funny, smart, romantic and uplifting, *Amelia Westlake* will steal your heart.’ – Nicole Hayes, author of *One True Thing*

For Emma Kersey



Hardie Grant acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Country on which we work, the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation and the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, and recognises their continuing connection to the land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

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THE

FLY&WHEEL

ERIN GOUGH

Hardie Grant

BOOKS

As far as English teachers go, I could do worse than Mr Hammer. He's a smart guy with a good haircut and an admirable passion for punctuation. He's taught me since the start of high school and I have only two misgivings: his views on the semicolon and the fact that he ruined my life.

To be fair, when he paired me with Georgina Trump for a class project, ruining my life probably wasn't his intention. Class Harmony is Mr Hammer's big thing, and I understand that bridging the gap between those in the class who carry pink clutch purses and those who don't is a legitimate part of that.

It was in a similar spirit of goodwill that I decided to make an effort with Georgina. This was despite the fact that when Mr Hammer said, 'Georgina, you're with Delilah,' she pretended not to know who I was, even though we've gone to school together for over four years now.

So when she giggled stupidly at things that weren't remotely humorous, I was tolerant. When she eye-rolled with her friends across the room, I refrained from strangling her. I even lent her my study notes when it became clear she hadn't read the book.

Little by little, she began to laugh at my jokes, and not with her fake giggle but with a slightly embarrassing (and therefore endearing) snort. People started to notice how well we were getting on. Our friendship seemed so unlikely, so against the usual order of things, that they started talking, and speculating.

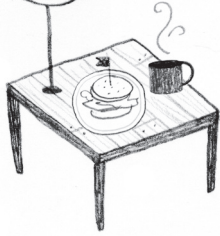
I'd heard the words before. Of course I had. *Lezzo*. *Dyke*. Some were actually quite creative, but that didn't make them easier to hear being muttered by the netball team's wing attack as she shoved me hard against a locker.

Soon this kind of thing was happening more than once a day. The words, once they'd been said aloud, seemed to multiply. I heard them whispered from the back row in biology. The hockey squad captain slugged a few at me as she steered me out the change room doors. They travelled on the breeze from the windows of the tuckshop, along the oval, and through the choir stalls.

And my new best friend, Georgina? She threw 'obsessive stalker' into the mix and asked to change English classes.

So much for Class Harmony.

1 Flamenco Hour



When life throws up in your lap, my father is fond of saying, *find yourself a distraction from the smell*. For him, this means watching *Horse Feathers* on a loop in a darkened room in his pyjamas. It's how he spent a whole month after my mother, June, ran out on us the January before last.

Not that the Marx Brothers ultimately did him much good. Dad's still a ball of quivering mush. That mother of mine really stomped on his heart. I'm hoping the overseas trip I've made him take – his first in the twenty years he's spent running our family cafe – will knock the misery out of him once and for all.

As for me? In the past month, I've been slammed against lockers, I've had insults about me scrawled on school desks and I've been called too many names to remember. But

with the Flywheel to run, a recuperative holiday's out of the question, and some thirties slapstick flick isn't going to cut it.

Lucky, then, that I've found my own diversion from the reek of proverbial vomit.

I call it Flamenco Hour.

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Six nights a week my running sheet is more or less like this:

7:51pm: My heart begins racing in anticipation.

7:52pm: My legs do this thing where they go numb along the insides.

7:53pm: Out of the corner of my eye, I see the stack of washing up on the Flywheel counter. I ignore it.

7:54pm: I toss my tea towel on the kitchen floor and sneak upstairs to our flat.

7:55pm: I wade through the junk in Dad's bedroom to the window that looks out over the street.

7:56pm: I peer into Charada, the tapas restaurant across the road.

7:57pm: I look at my watch. Not long now.

7:58pm: I keep my sights on the figures making their way through Charada: two girls in flamenco skirts and a boy in high-waisted pants.

7:59pm: The three of them take their places on the scuffed boards between the dinner tables. A loud crackle

erupts from a speaker and a man's warbling voice starts singing in Spanish.

8:00pm: They begin to dance.

The tall girl with the red skirt is Angeline. Ramon, all in black, is her brother. The other girl, her dark hair parted down the middle and fixed with a tortoiseshell comb, is their cousin. Her name is Rosa Barea, and she is the reason I stand here watching: watching and imagining, as she dances, her arms around my waist, and my hands on her hips.

The music stops and for a moment I am still there with her, still charged with the rhythm of the dance and the warmth of her body. For a moment it doesn't matter that I'm the butt of a hundred playground jokes while she is an elegant goddess with the greenest eyes in the Southern Hemisphere. For a moment Rosa Barea loves me despite all of it, with all her heart.

While the fantasy lasts, I forget about the misery of the last four weeks. I'm in the arms of a beautiful woman, and we're dancing.

Then I catch my reflection in the window. An ordinary girl in a dirty cafe apron looks back. It brings me down to earth.

Who are you kidding, Delilah? I sigh, my breath hot against the glass.