



The Silent Kookaburra

Liza Perrat

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All eleven-year-old Tanya Randall wants is a happy family. But Mum does nothing besides housework, Dad's always down the pub and Nanna Purvis moans at everyone except her dog. Then Shelley arrives — the miracle baby who fuses the Randall family in love for their little gumnut blossom.

Tanya's life gets even better when she meets an uncle she didn't know she had. He tells her she's beautiful and could be a model. Her family refuses to talk about him. But that's okay, it's their little secret.

Then one blistering summer day tragedy strikes, and the surrounding mystery and suspicion tear apart this fragile family web.

Embracing the social changes of 1970s Australia, against a backdrop of native fauna and flora, *The Silent Kookaburra* is a haunting exploration of the blessings, curses and tyranny of memory.

Unsettling psychological suspense blending the intensity of Wally Lamb with the atmosphere of Peter James, this story will get under your skin.

The Silent Kookaburra Details

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From Reader Review The Silent Kookaburra for online ebook

Jenny Reeve says

Set in Wollongong, Australia between 1972 and 2016.

Tanya, 11 years old and living with her parents and Nanna Purvis at Gumtree Cottage. The name of the cottage reminds me of a quiet and quaint cosy home, but Gumtree Cottage is far from that. There has been nothing but bad luck for Tanya and her family at this house. Bad luck that drives her mother insane and her father to booze.

The characters are all very unique and interesting. Tanya, ashamed of her weight and desperate for her mother and father to be 'normal' turns to her Uncle Blackie for the love and attention that she so badly needs. But he is 'a bad man, a pervert'. This phrase keeps coming back to haunt Tanya throughout the book, words that were spoken by Nanna Purvis and Tanya's best friend Angela. Tanya falls for Uncle Blackie's soft words and grooming tactics from the start. Something deep down is telling her that this is not right, something is wrong. But how can he be a bad man? There is a twist at the end of the story that was totally unexpected.

Nanna Purvis grows on you. She is hard faced and stern, but soft in the middle. A character that has you disliking her at first, but like the sun hidden behind a cloud, she begins to slowly come out into the clear blue sky and shine. Her phrases are hilarious at times and had me laughing aloud.

The story for me was very good; I found it difficult to put my Kindle down. A real page-turner and a story that I would read again. This is a tale with mixed emotions throughout. I laughed, I cried and I was shocked. Everything required for a good read.

I felt uncomfortable a times reading the chapters that included child molestation. It was not overdone or anything like that, I simply felt ill at ease reading these parts. But, having said that, they were necessary for the story to unfold.

Liza Perrat writes with feeling and humour, each and every word written to draw the reader in.

G.J. says

3.5 stars as I can't fault the writing. I bought this after reading one glowing review which did not mention in any detail the themes, I don't think I will do this again. This book was relentlessly depressing and covered so many sad/difficult/ appalling / dreadful situations that it swamped me in negativity. Told from the perspective of an 11 yr old girl, set in a small town in Australia during the 1970's. After reading the story I can only say no young girl should ever have to cope with even half of what this girl did, whilst is is fiction it is sadly only too believable. I found the creepy grooming of Tanya by the Uncle very disturbing and the apparent neglect unsettling.

Kendall says

This is my first read for author Liza Perrat and I thoroughly enjoyed her beautiful writing style.

Liza Perrat transforms you into living side by side with eleven year old Tanya Randall in Wollongong Australia. Tanya hasn't had the easiest childhood so far with being bullied for her weight and how she looks. All that Tanya is wishing for is a happy family with a baby sister or baby brother. Tanya's mother Eleanor has had multiple miscarriages in the past but miraculously she becomes pregnant and has baby girl Shelley. Eleanor is finally feeling at ease with her new baby sister, mother, father, and Nana Purvis living in Gumtree Cottage.

Slowly, the seams start to unravel for the Randall family and life is definitely not as it seems for Tanya. Although, Tanya befriends a mysterious uncle Blackie that she never knew that she had. When Tanya brings up this Uncle Blackie with her immediate family, they frequently avoid talking about this mysterious uncle.

This novel touches upon some very challenging issues that present in our society. Child neglect, postpartum depression, alcoholism, and child abuse. Tragedy struck for this family and grief was overwhelming resulting in an unhealthy way of each family member "coping" with the grief. Tanya experienced and witnessed traumatic events that little girls should definitely not have to go through.

This was an emotional read that pulls on your heart!

Towards the end I felt like it was getting a bit stale and was wondering when the puzzle would all be connected... I got a little bored but it connected nicely at the end :).

What I really enjoyed about this novel is how inspiring Liza Perrat's writing style is! Beautifully expressed across the pages. I, at times felt like I was actually seeing the descriptions of the land, animals, and smells of Australia.

Overall, strong 4 stars for this one!! :)

Steve White says

Didn't know what to expect with this book, it was pushed as a "psychological thriller", a genre which I have not delved into before.

Very fortunate that I had the opportunity to read The Silent Kookaburra. It's the first book that I have chewed through in a matter of days, eagerly turning each page and becoming lost in the story.

Another great aspect of the novel was it's location. Set in Wollongong there were some terrific references to streets and landmarks across the Illawarra. As someone who works in Wollongong, it made the book real. The subject matter is dark, especially when you can see where author is about to take the story. At times, even confronting.

There's often a mantra in life on the importance grandparents play in children's lives. The cantankerous but loving matriarch, Nanna Purvis epitomises that notion. Plus, she made me chuckle a number of times. The Silent Kookaburra is a novel I can highly recommend.

Jo Barton says

In 1970s Australia eleven year old Tanya Randall is growing up in a family which always seems to be at odds with itself. Her mother is not quite functioning on all cylinders, her father spends too much time and too much money in local bars and even the curmudgeonly Nanna Purvis does little to help to relieve the stress

that Tanya faces. Bullied at school for her weight problem and her friendship with the 'foreign' girl, Angela, Tanya seems to be forever just one step out of step with both her family and her peers. The arrival of Shelley, her sickly baby sister, does nothing to help relieve the unrelenting unhappiness of Tanya's life. The only bright spot is Tanya's clandestine meetings with someone who may bring even more problems into her already troubled life.

What then follows is a tightly plotted psychological thriller which induces all the languor and the heat of a blisteringly hot Australian summer. The image of a sad and lonely adolescent is beautifully described as is the waywardness and emptiness of a family who are damaged irreparably by the events which unfold during this time.

The Silent Kookaburra is a real departure for this author whose previous novels include the excellent historical Bone Angel series and as a huge fan of that series I wasn't sure whether I would be disappointed by the author's change of direction. I'm pleased to say that I was hugely impressed by this novel. Throughout the story the psychological tension is palpable as is Tanya's involvement in the unfolding events of which she is too inexperienced to fully understand. The writing is flawless and only someone who has a deep affinity for this part of Australia can write with such descriptive assurance. Time and place came completely to life for me; I could hear the 'Garooagarooagaroo' cackle of the Kookaburra and could smell the sweet scented jasmine that whispered in the slight breeze above the gum tree where baby Shelley lay whingeing in her pram. But most of all I fell in love with Tanya, naïve, unsophisticated and yet with a wisdom that belied her tender years, all I wanted was for her to find some sort of peaceful resolution to counterbalance the horror of what was being thrown at her by her dysfunctional family life.

The Silent Kookaburra is a tight and tense family drama which engages the reader's attention from start to finish, and which bears all the hallmarks of this talented author's fine attention to detail and natural story telling ability.

Meg - A Bookish Affair says

"The Silent Kookaburra" is a thriller from writer Liza Perrat. I've enjoyed some of Perrat's other books, all historical fiction. This one is a departure from genre for her and turned out to be a positive gamble for me! Tanya is a child who doesn't quite fit in. She's teased at school. At home, she feels ignored and sometimes unloved. When her uncle that she knew nothing about enters the picture, it will upend her life and that of her family's.

The subject matter of the book is quite difficult. I really felt for a lot of the characters in this book because of the way that the author writes the details of their lives. Tanya's mother has gone through many miscarriages trying to expand their family so when she finally gives birth to Shelley, the family feels like all of their troubles are over at first. Shelley has severe colic and Tanya's mother starts acting strange and becomes obsessed with cleaning. Tanya seeks attention from her newfound uncle but it's not a good kind of attention.

The pacing and writing of the book is good. Pacing is incredibly important with thrillers in order to keep up the intrigue of the book. As more bad things befall Tanya and her family, you are riveted by trying to put things together in order to figure out what is truly going on. The author gives you just enough detail to keep you wanting to continue the story because you want to find out more about what is going on and what will happen to the characters in the book. The author also does a great job of building tension throughout the book. I HAD to know how it was going to all end up for Tanya!

One limitation of the book is that Tanya, our narrator, is only a child when the book takes place so she

doesn't always see what is truly going on. I did find myself wanting to know more about Uncle Blackie and what made him tick throughout the book but this wasn't a full distraction from enjoying the book.

Overall, this was a page turner for me. The subject matter is difficult (murder, abuse of a minor, etc.) so it may not be for all readers. If you like thrillers, this may be a good pick for you!

Marianne says

4.5 stars

The Silent Kookaburra is the fourth novel by Australian-born author, Liza Perrat. It's the middle of summer, January 1972, and ten-year-old Tanya Randall is dying to go to the beach. Mum won't take her because, with baby Shelley crying all the time with colic, she's worn out. And more and more, after work, Dad heads to the pub.

The girls at school are always taunting her about her weight, but she does, at least, have one good friend, Angela, although Tanya's ever-cranky Nana Purvis doesn't approve: she doesn't like "them Eyeties". Then there's Uncle Blackie: he's told her to keep their meet-ups secret, because Nana Purvis would have a pink fit if she knew; he brings her gifts and tells her she could be a model.... But then the unthinkable happens, and everything gets much, much worse.

Perrat give the reader with a wholly believable plot; her characters are easily recognisable to those familiar with the era; their dialogue, too, is credible, and often supports the common mindset of the time. Perrat's marvellous descriptive prose establishes her story in coastal Australia with an authenticity that is, no doubt, drawn from personal experience, and makes the heat of the Aussie summer is palpable and the birdsong audible.

She firmly roots it in the early seventies with mentions of certain 70's Aussie icons, be they lollies, bikkies, everyday meals, school milk, TV shows, remedies for colic, items of furniture or leisure activities; most are guaranteed to be a nostalgia trip for readers of a certain vintage.

The pace is quite in keeping with that of an Aussie summer, but picks up for the dramatic climax. While Nana Purvis may be an irritant voice, her comments, her malapropisms and her strong opinions do provide lighter moments. Tanya's voice emerges clear and genuine: the confusion and conflicting emotions that plague the adolescent are expertly conveyed.

Perrat touches on many issues: paedophiles and how they groom their prey, the devastating effects of PTSD, teen pregnancy and forced adoption, depression and suicide. Murder, OCD, drink-driving, adultery, xenophobia, guilt and family secrets also feature. This is a gripping and powerful read that will have a much wider appeal than just Wollongong locals and Aussies living in the seventies. Recommended! With thanks to the author for my copy to read and review.

Meggy says

The rating was rounded up from 3.5 to 4. The original rating and review can be found on my blog @<https://chocolatenwaffles.com/>

The Silent Kookaburra. **I admit I had to Google what a kookaburra was.** I am not familiar with Australia and its fauna, except for the horrifying pictures of spiders, snakes, and frogs I spot on my friends' pages on Instagram! **So from the beginning, this story was meant to be a journey. My journey on a different continent in the 70s and a little girl's journey through her early life.**

I had no idea what to expect. No reading blurb, no information, no checking of reviews from friends. **I took my passport, in the form of my Kindle, and I embarked on a moving, disturbing, and authentic narration.** To quote my dear friend Annie @themisstery, **this is a quiet novel.** Don't be fooled, I am not saying nothing is happening, because it would be far from the truth. **But this is one of those stories where you follow a family through time and places, days and nights, one of those stories which make you reflect about actions, reactions, human needs and behavior.**

Liza Perrat created what I believe to be a realistic Aussie family, introducing me to some slang, describing the beauty and the danger of the land through the eyes of a young girl named Tanya, who might recognize tangible danger but be blind to what lurks close to home. But don't we all?

Tanya was a lovely girl to follow, and I could see her struggle as clear as my toes in a paradise island's water. Finding your voice in a crumbling family, with fate striking and the world not turning right anymore is scary and lonely. I was also very moved by her mother's story, words giving a face to desperation, to a need that won't go, to a grief you can't carry. It was exceptionally well-written and so powerful it tugs at my heartstrings. **Families are made up of individuals, and every one of them comes with a background, a luggage, a personality.** For a family to find their balance, all those elements need to find a way to cohabit, and contrary to what happy stories make us believe, it is not so easy. **Being called a family doesn't mean anything if you don't create, nurture, and protect the bonds between the different units composing it. This story is about family. This story is about finding strength, finding or rediscovering yourself, and facing what comes your way, with a little help from those closest to you.**

A special mention goes to Tanya's grandmother for making me chuckle every time she spoke!

There are several layers to this novel, each member of the family going through changes, pain, hours, with a different personality, a unique voice and a touch of realism that makes you connect right away with them. No, I did not understand all their decisions. No, I did not agree with everything. But boy did I feel for them. I was entirely immersed in a beautiful exotic setting, witnessing the same events in life as we see here. Not that I thought all Australians had Kangaroos as dogs or were so different from us! **But it takes a fine amount of details and a strong prose to make me travel through time and space without a Tardis, and this is what the author beautifully did. It was not just about the setting or the era, it was about the characters. Mr and Mrs John Doe and their problems, with an amazingly gripping, sometimes creepy, and smooth writing to keep you reading in the sun.**

I would like to thank the author for providing me with a copy of her book in exchange for an honest review.

Rae says

Set in 1970s Wollongong, Australia, *The Silent Kookaburra* is told through the eyes of Tanya Randall, an overweight girl, socially excluded at school, teetering on the edge of womanhood. Uncertain of her place in the world, Tanya clings to family. And it's that family that make Perrat's novel so special. There's Mum, obsessively cleaning, trying to block out memories of the multiple miscarriages she's suffered; there's Dobson, Tanya's well-meaning, alcoholic father doing his best to hold the family together; there's the fantastically opinionated Nanna Purvis, whose dry wit and sparkling dialogue light up the page; there's much longed for, perfect, baby Shelley and finally there's Uncle Blackie, whose dubious past looms threateningly like a dark storm cloud ready to disrupt Tanya's summer. And yet, despite all their problems, Perrat's writing means this novel is anything but gloomy. Instead it's a wonderful portrayal of time and place, a page-turner with family at its heart.

Sheila says

This is the first book that I have read by Liza Perrat and I enjoyed it very much. Set in Australia in the 1970's, we meet eleven year old Tanya Randall and her dysfunctional family. A slow burner of a book, which nevertheless makes you want to keep turning the pages to find out exactly what is going to happen to these characters.

Eva says

Wow. Like seriously, wow! The back cover of the book says this story will get under your skin and that is not a lie. I can't stop thinking about it.

Set in Australia in the early 1970's, this novel tackles a number of dark and disturbing topics, seen through the eyes of our narrator, eleven-year-old Tanya.

Tanya struggles at school. She's not the prettiest, nor the skinniest but what she wants more than anything, is a happy family. Sadly her mother has suffered multiple miscarriages and this has left its mark. When finally baby Shelley joins the household, Tanya thinks things might be looking up and her wish of a happy family will come true. But then tragedy strikes and the family will never be the same again.

There's also uncle Blackie who befriends Tanya. But why won't anyone in the family talk about him? And why should Tanya keep their friendship a secret?

This book may be upsetting to some readers as it deals with mental issues and paedophilia, amongst others. It's heartbreakingly sad and incredibly tense but so amazingly well written and I just couldn't put it down. It's powerful, authentic, realistic and believable. Having Tanya as a narrator works extremely well, especially when seeing things unfold no child her age should have to deal with.

Liza Perrat describes everything quite vividly. I've never been to Australia but had no problem imagining the hot summer temperatures, the sounds of the various animals and even the smells. Mentions of popstars of old and the fun Australian slang only added to the experience. As do many of the things that come out Nana

Purvis' mouth, fitting for that day and age.

The Silent Kookaburra is one gripping and compelling novel and I can't recommend it enough.

Many, many thanks to Liza Perrat for sending me a copy of this novel. It was my utmost pleasure to read and review.

Brenda says

4.5★s

Eleven year old Tanya Randall was teased and bullied at school – she was overweight and had only one friend, Angela whose family was Italian so Angela was teased and bullied as well. It was the 1970s in Wollongong Australia and Tanya knew her mother Eleanor had been trying to have a baby for a long time. She had had many miscarriages until finally baby Shelley arrived, healthy and beautiful. Tanya and her family; Mum, Dad, Nanna Purvis and now Shelley all lived in Gumtree Cottage where they'd lived for as long as she could remember.

Baby Shelley was a delight to Tanya – she loved her little sister and cared for her while her mother did the housework. But when Shelley was crying with colic, continually and without a break, the family began to fracture. Tanya's dad would disappear to the pub; her mother would clean everything in sight – no one knew how to help little Shelley. One day though, Tanya met an uncle she hadn't known she had – the closeness she was no longer feeling at home was made better by her kind and generous uncle.

And when tragedy struck the family, their grief seemed insurmountable – what had happened; who was responsible; what would they do? Life would never be the same again...

The Silent Kookaburra by Aussie author Liza Perrat is an intense and gripping psychological thriller that tears at the heartstrings and makes you want to do something to stop what you just know is going to happen! 1970s Australia was a time of change and the setting of the novel as well as the time – day after day of relentless heat – was extremely authentic. Nanna Purvis was a typical rough and tough old lady of the time. A thoroughly enjoyable novel, *The Silent Kookaburra* is one I highly recommend.

With thanks to the author for my copy to read and review.

Laurie • The Baking Bookworm says

3.5 STARS - I have read and enjoyed two of Perrat's earlier Historical Fiction novels set during WWII (Wolfsangel, Blood Rose Angel). She is a wonderful writer whose plots are compelling and characters leap off the page. When she approached me to review this book I was more than eager to read something from her from a different genre and era - suspense in the 'groovy' 1970's.

The book is set within Perrat's native Australia with Tanya, an eleven year old girl as our protagonist. She's a tween growing up in the 1970's who experiences bullying and lives in a dysfunctional family. Perrat got into Tanya's mindset, rationale and vernacular well and gives her readers a different perspective looking at the mystery through a child's eyes. But, using a child as the protagonist limits how much the reader can see and I

found some scenes hard to read when I could easily predict what would happen but naive Tanya could not.

These emotional scenes are contrasted by the humour of Nanna Purvis with her mispronounced words and opinionated 'old school' values. While Tanya and her Nanna were quite vibrant as characters, unfortunately some of the secondary characters didn't feel quite so well-defined (Angela and her family, the mean girl down the street etc).

This book is touted as a suspense read but I found it was much more of an analysis on this dysfunctional family. There was a murder but it was slowly paced and played second fiddle to the turbulent lives of the Randall family. And wow, were they turbulent! There were some scenes that were quite disturbing and hard to read. But these scenes help the reader to root for Tanya who has lived through so much and, unfortunately, has had to take up more responsibilities in her family because her parents are absent - emotionally and physically. There is still an element of suspense that progresses through the book but the tension wasn't there for me. The twist, which wasn't predictable but wasn't shocking either, is left until the end.

Overall, this was a good 'slow burn' kind of read that had some hard to read scenes but wasn't as suspenseful as I had hoped. It had some very powerful scenes but I would call it a well written story that features several social issues and a destructive family who suffers through tragedy, loss, mental illness, abuse and the effects of family secrets.

Disclaimer: My sincere thanks to Liza Perrat for providing me with a complimentary e-book copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

Eileen says

Very atmospheric, oppressive with a mounting sense of foreboding, this book envelops the reader in a subtle vice grip. The fierce heat of an Australian summer is unrelenting, and the elements in general are a force in the story.

'It could have been the westerly wind, though, that blasted for over a month, gales whistling though the fig, gum and jacarandas, sneaking beneath the low-slung verandah eaves, and rattling the stone foundations.' There's no escape from the unpleasant web, and thus one must continue until the outcome is known, all the while dreading to learn. Lonely, chubby eleven year old Tanya is the protagonist, who longs for a normal happy family and a friend. Her quirky grandmother who lives with them is quite flawed but well-meaning in a rough, clumsy way. Her colorful language and unique perspective lend a bit of humor through the darkness. The story unfolds during the early 1970s. Much to Tanya's dismay, the family lives in Gumtree Cottage, built years ago by convict labor. Tanya feels a sense of shame, as if they're taking advantage of the misery of others, and she feels that living there brings bad luck.

I was swept along. This was quite mesmerizing, although increasingly disturbing. The author does a masterful job of conveying the vibrant Australian background. She grew up in Australia, where she worked as a nurse and midwife. After meeting her French husband on a Bangkok bus, France became her home. In a different vein, Liza Perrat has written an intriguing sounding French historical series. That will be on my list!

LindyLouMac says

A change of direction for this author which she pulled off, loved it and look forward to more psychological suspense from her.

Full review coming soon.
