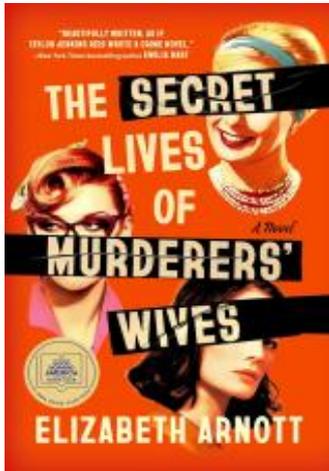

The Secret Lives of Murderers' Wives

by Elizabeth Arnott



About the Book

A remarkable trio whose lives have been cracked wide open by their husbands? crimes unite to catch a serial killer in this dazzlingly captivating novel.

Beverley, Elsie and Margot are not your average housewives. They are all wives of convicted killers. During the sun-drenched summer of 1966, the three women form an unlikely friendship after the discoveries of their husbands? brutal crimes. With their exes --- some of California?s most infamous murderers --- dead or behind bars, they are attempting to forge a new future for themselves.

Headstrong Beverley tries compulsively to maintain control of everything around her, all while raising two children. Bookish Elsie fights to make a name for herself in the newsroom, working among men who sneer at her career goals. Glamorous Margot prefers partying to homemaking and devotes all her energy to upholding the appearance that everything is fine --- anything to quell the shame from her husband?s deceit.

They know people look at them and think only one thing: How could they not have known what their husbands were doing? How much are they to blame? And yet, when a string of local killings hits the news, the three women --- underestimated, overlooked, shrewd --- decide to get to work. After all, who better to catch a killer than those who have shared their lives and homes with one?

At once a riveting portrayal of shattered trust and a story of gripping suspense, *THE SECRET LIVES OF MURDERERS' WIVES* is a testament to the intricacies of women?s lives and how the deep bonds of female friendship can empower, uplift and lead us to endure.

Discussion Guide

1. Beverley, Elsie and Margot have each reacted in very different ways to the discovery that their husbands were killers. Which of the women do you most relate to in that sense? What do you think you would do in the same situation?
2. Beverley has a complex relationship with her mother. How much do you think one's upbringing informs their choice of romantic partner?
3. Elsie is attempting to climb the ranks in the newsroom but finds herself battling sexism and snobbery. Have you ever experienced prejudice at work? Did it make you more determined to succeed, as it did Elsie?
4. Beverley is unable to fully let go of her ex-husband even though he committed terrible crimes. Do you understand why she felt connected to him?
5. The book is set against a backdrop of police misconduct and prejudice. Do you think our modern society's general opinion of the police has changed over the years?
6. Throughout the novel, Beverley worries that her son, Benjamin, might have inherited the same "rotten core" as his father. Where do you stand on the nature vs nurture debate? Is "evil" something that is inherited, or learned?
7. Margot insists on partying her way through the echoes of her husband's crimes. In your experience, how important have you found humor and escapism to be in dealing with difficult circumstances?
8. The novel features lots of music references from the 1960s, from the Rolling Stones to Dusty Springfield. Are there any songs that you would add to a THE SECRET LIVES OF MURDERERS' WIVES playlist?
9. At one point, Margot comforts Beverley by telling her: "We cannot keep bad people from doing bad things." Do you believe this is true today? What do you think about the sense of responsibility Beverley felt?
10. Are there any likable male characters in the novel? Do you think the women could be accused of disliking all men?
11. Do you think the families of the murderers in THE SECRET LIVES OF MURDERERS' WIVES are treated fairly by the press and the general public? Were you surprised that Elsie, Beverley and Margot didn't completely retreat from the public eye?
12. How much do you relate to the passage "Being a murderer's wife gifted Elsie something --- a layer of armor that, until then, she'd been lacking"? Do you think we can be made stronger by the most traumatic things that happen to us? Have you had that experience?
13. Did you judge Beverley, Elsie or Margot at any point in the story? Did your opinions of them change as the book progressed? Did you have a favorite character in the novel?
14. Beverley, Elsie and Margot are all very different, but their friendship is incredibly strong. Do you think our differences can make us closer? What did you admire most about their friendship?

Author Bio

Elizabeth Arnott is an award-winning writer and journalist and has written critically acclaimed historical fiction as Lizzie Pook. Her work --- covering everything from true crime to Arctic exploration --- has featured in publications including *The Sunday Times*, *National Geographic*, *The New York Times Book Review* and *The Guardian*. She lives with her husband and their young daughter in London, where she spends far too much time drinking iced coffee and watching serial killer shows.

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