



# [The attack]

By Catherine Jinks

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## Genre and Subject

*Australian fiction*

*Dysfunctional families -- Fiction*

*Custody of children -- Fiction*

*Islands -- Queensland -- Fiction*

*Thrillers (Fiction)*

## Synopsis

Robyn Ayres works as the camp caretaker on Finch Island, a former leper colony off the coast of Queensland. Her current clients are a group of ex-military men who run a tough-love program for troubled teens. The latest crop looks like the usual mix of bad boys and sad boys. Then Robyn takes a second look at a kid called Darren. Last time she saw him his name was Aaron, and Robyn was his primary school teacher. And she was somehow at the centre of a vicious small-town custody battle involving his terrifying grandmother. Bruising classroom dynamics, manipulative parents and carers and horrendous small-town politics form the backdrop to a nail-biting thriller in which the tensions of ten years ago start to play themselves out, building to a violent climax in the present day. Robyn escaped the past once. Now it's back-and this time there's no way out.

## Author Biography

Catherine Jinks is the Australian author of more than thirty books for all ages. She has garnered many awards, including the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award (three times), the Victorian Premier's Award, the Aurealis Award for Science Fiction, the Australian Lbby Award, and the Davitt Award for Crime Fiction. Her work has been published in Australia, New Zealand, Britain, the United States, Germany, Spain, France, Portugal, Poland, Russia, the Czech Republic and Thailand.

Catherine was born in Brisbane, Queensland, in 1963. She grew up in Papua New Guinea, where her father worked as a patrol officer. Her high-school years were spent in Sydney, NSW; in 2006, her alma mater, Ku-ring-gai High School, named its library after her.

From 1982 to 1986, Catherine studied at the University of Sydney, graduating with an honours degree in medieval history. She then worked on Westpac Banking Corporation's staff magazine for approximately seven years. In 1992 she married Peter Dockrill, a Canadian journalist; in 1993 she and her husband left Australia for a brief spell in Nova Scotia, where she began to write full time. They returned to Australia in 1994, and Catherine gave birth to her daughter Hannah in 1997. Since 1998, she and her family have been living in Leura, NSW.

## Discussion Starters

1. What was your favourite part of the book?
2. What was your least favourite?
3. Did you race to the end, or was it more of a slow burn?
4. What did you think of the writing? What passages strike you as insightful, even profound? Perhaps a bit of dialog that's funny or poignant or that encapsulates a character? Maybe there's a particular comment that states the book's thematic concerns?
5. How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to "get into it"? How did you feel reading it—amused, sad, disturbed, confused, bored...?
6. Describe the main characters—personality traits, motivations, and inner qualities.
  - Why do characters do what they do?
  - Are their actions justified?
  - Describe the dynamics between characters (in a marriage, family, or friendship).
  - How has the past shaped their lives?
  - Do you admire or disapprove of them?
  - Do they remind you of people you know?
7. Are the main characters dynamic—changing or maturing by the end of the book? Do they learn about themselves, how the world works and their role in it?
8. What surprised you most about the book?
9. How did your opinion of the book change as you read it?
10. Has this novel changed you—broadened your perspective? Have you learned something new or been exposed to different ideas about people or a certain part of the world? Do you think you'll remember it in a few months or years?
11. If you could ask the author a question, what would you ask? Have you read other books by the same author? If so how does this book compare. If not, does this book inspire you to read others? How does the book's title work in relation to the book's contents? If you could give the book a new title, what would it be?
12. Is this book overrated or underrated?
13. Did this book remind you of any other books?
14. Would you ever consider re-reading it? Why or why not?
15. Are there lingering questions from the book you're still thinking about?
16. Did the book strike you as original?
17. Is the ending satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?

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- *Wild place* by Christian White