



[The beautiful words]

By Vanessa McCausland

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Genre and Subject

Best friends -- Fiction

Mothers and daughters -- Fiction

Family secrets -- Fiction

Australian fiction

Domestic fiction

Synopsis

Two best friends, one summer night, and twenty years of silence ... what happened at the lighthouse? Sylvie is a lover of words and a collector of stories, only she has lost her own. She has no words for that night at the lighthouse when their lives changed forever. What happened to cleave her apart from her best friend and soulmate, Kase?

Sylvie yearns to rekindle their deep connection, so when Kase invites her to the wild Tasmanian coast to celebrate her 40th birthday, she accepts - despite the ghosts she must face.

As Sylvie struggles to find her feet among old friends, she bonds with local taxi boat driver Holden. But he is hiding from the world, too. Through an inscription in an old book, Sylvie and Kase discover their mothers have a history, hidden from their daughters.

As they unpick what took place before they were born, they're forced to face the rift in their own friendship, and the question of whether it's ever okay to keep a secret to protect the person you love.

Author Biography

Vanessa McCausland studied English and Australian literature at The University of Sydney and has worked as a journalist for nearly 20 years. Her writing has appeared in The Daily Telegraph, The Sydney Morning Herald, news.com.au, Mamamia, Body+Soul, and Kidspot.com.au.

She is currently a contributing editor at News Corp. Vanessa lives in Sydney with her husband and daughter.

Discussion Starters

1. What are some of the key themes and symbols in the book?
2. The power and the fragility of deep friendship connections are explored. What was the message about friendship you felt was ultimately conveyed?
3. Did it make you think about your own friendships and how they may have changed over the years?
4. There is an exploration of loss – of memory, friendship, of a loved one in death. What do you think was found by the end of the book?
5. What role did memory and its fallibility play in the book?
6. How did the setting reflect the unfolding action and Sylvie's emotions?
7. The novel explores the healing qualities of reading and writing. Can you relate?
8. What did you think of Holden's relationship with his daughter?
9. How did you feel about Kase by the end of the book?
10. Discuss the themes of betrayal and forgiveness as presented in the book. Do they resonate with any aspects in your own life?
11. Through the course of the book, which characters do you feel were most able to evolve on a personal level?
12. The book is about a woman finding her Praise for Vanessa's novels: 'McCausland is a natural storyteller who weaves love, loss, mystery and secrets into a satisfying tale' Herald Sun 'Superbly atmospheric, absolutely gripping, and exquisitely layered ... it has haunted me in the days since finishing it' Better Reading voice. Was there a particular moment where you felt Sylvie found hers?
13. What did you feel was the ultimate message of the novel?

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