



[A little bird]

By James, Wendy

First published in 2022

Genre and Subject

Homecoming -- Fiction

Family secrets -- Fiction

Missing persons -- Fiction

Australian fiction

Detective and mystery fiction

Domestic fiction

Synopsis

Running from a bad relationship, journalist Jo Sharpe heads home to Arthurville, the drought-stricken town she turned her back on years earlier. While some things have changed—her relationship with her ailing, crotchety father, her new job at the community newspaper—Jo finds that her return has rekindled the grief and uncertainty she experienced during her childhood following the inexplicable disappearance of her mother and baby sister.

Returning to Arthurville has its unexpected pleasures, though, as Jo happily reconnects with old friends and makes a few new ones. But she can't let go of her search for answers to that long-ago mystery. And as she keeps investigating, the splash she's making begins to ripple outward—far beyond the disappearance of her mother and sister.

Jo is determined to dig as deep as it takes to get answers. But it's not long before she realises that someone among the familiar faces doesn't want her picking through the debris of the past. And they'll go to any lengths to silence the little bird before she sings the truth.

Author Biography

Wendy James is the celebrated author of eight novels, including the bestselling *The Mistake* and the compelling *The Golden Child*, which was shortlisted for the 2017 Ned Kelly Award for crime. Her debut novel, *Out of the Silence*, won the 2006 Ned Kelly Award for first crime novel, and was shortlisted for the Nita May Dobbie award for women's writing. Wendy works as an editor at the Australian Institute of Health Innovation and writes some of the sharpest and most topical domestic noir novels in the country.

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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- *Day's end by Garry Disher*