



The Secret by the Lake

Louise Douglas

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Amy's always felt like something's been missing in her life, but as a nanny for the Laurent family - Julia, Alain, Viviane - she feels complete.

So Amy wouldn't think of leaving them when a sudden tragedy forces them to move from France to the small lakeside cottage in the isolated Somerset village where Julia grew up.

But there's something strange about the cottage by the lake. This is where Julia spent her childhood. But she used to have an older sister, Caroline, whom she rarely speaks about...

Who disappeared at just seventeen...

Who has a secret the whole village wants kept hidden for ever...

Louise Douglas's beautifully crafted and haunting page-turner will hold you in its grip.

The Secret by the Lake Details

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Author : Louise Douglas

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From Reader Review The Secret by the Lake for online ebook

Karen says

This is the fifth book I have read by Louise Douglas and all have been very enjoyable. This one is no exception.

Amy hasn't really had a happy family life of her own, and regards the Laurents as her family. As general companion and nanny to their young daughter Viviane, she lives with them in Paris and life is good.

Unfortunately all good things must come to an end. Amy is recalled back home for family reasons and then tragedy strikes the Laurents and they return to Somerset, to an old dilapidated family cottage to live. Julia Laurent asks Amy to return to them and this is where the story really begins.

There is a really creepy, supernatural aspect to this story and although I'm not easily spooked, there were times when I didn't want to turn the lights out at night!

Both the cottage and the lake have distinct personalities of their own and are integral to the story. The lake can change from being a calm, peaceful and beautiful vision to something dark and menacing, whilst unhappiness seems to seep from the walls of the cottage and affects everybody within it.

Julia had an older sister, Caroline who died aged 17. There is obviously some deep mystery surrounding Caroline as Julia, in her distressed state doesn't want to talk about her however when a malevolent presence is felt in the cottage and affects Viviane, Amy feels compelled to find out more.

Running alongside the unexplained and disturbing happenings at the cottage is a love story involving Amy. Life at the cottage was sometimes so depressing and dismal that I was so glad for Amy that she found someone to bring some much needed lightness in to her life. However, even this has its problems and there are times when it seems that everyone is destined for unhappiness.

All the characters are so wonderfully drawn; Julia can seem so selfish at times and is so wrapped up in her own misery that everyone else is forgotten. There were times when my heart broke for Viviane, so young but unhappy and relying on her imaginary friends. Amy was the glue that held them together but even she couldn't perform miracles.

This is a beautifully written, atmospheric and haunting story of intrigue, family secrets and complicity in lies. With a timeline starting in 1931 and then moving forward to 1961, this was an excellent read and one that I can happily recommend. I loved it and can add this to my list of other 5* reads by Louise Douglas.

Agi says

I can't express how much I was looking forwards to reading this book - I have heard amazing things about Louise Douglas and her books (The Secret by the Lake was my first read by this author, somehow have never managed to read other novels, even though I have them on my TBR pile, of course!), and lately heard only prizes from friends about this newest release. Also, after reading the blurb I was convinced this is for

sure going to be up to my bookish street.

So I started reading it and waited, and waited, and waited for something to wow me as much as it wow-ed the other bloggers. Don't get me wrong, it was a beautifully written and thoroughly plotted story, but it just didn't make such impression on me. I am not against paranormal in the stories, but this time I just couldn't get this whole ghost subplot. Sure, I know it was there to rehabilitate one of the characters, but on the whole it just didn't sit with me. Also, relatively quickly I guessed the two important to the story things - namely what happened to Caroline and what was happening to Viviane, and who was involved in this dirty business, and that there was much more to Caroline than met the eyes. So when the grande finale arrived, I was not at all surprised. Sure, Caroline's presence was needed to explain what happened in the past, to stop the history to repeat itself but altogether, for me it made the whole reading just unbelievable - somehow it didn't fit this kind of book.

Nevertheless, even though I guessed what happened 30 years ago and what was happening now, revealing this fact by the author has shocked me and made me feel so, so sad and powerless. Maybe because something such sinister was happening all the time and there was no - one there to help? I must admit, it broke my heart a little.

The atmosphere in this book is so grim - I had a feeling that the fog hovering over the lake is twining around me, I just could feel the chill. We have a character here fighting a depression after her husband has been murdered, we have a cold, unloved house, we have a very sad and tragic past, and it only gets creepier and creepier, especially when Viviane, Julia's daughter, becomes a new best friend - Julia's dead sister, Caroline. It's really amazing that the author has managed to create such atmosphere, make the book so ghostly, full of intrigues and tragic incidents. The characters in the story are also not the easiest ones to like or to relate to, at least in my case. I understand that Julia and Viviane's lives went upside down and I truly fell for them, but Julia was not the only widow in the world, right? I couldn't watch the poor Viviane, so abandoned and so alone in this sad, grim house - Julia was just too much into her own grief and she seemed to just wash her hands of all the things that were happening in her life. Fortunately there was Amy to pick up what was broken, and I don't want to think what would happen without her? The local villagers were not too happy, as well, and I'd rather not live there.

Louise Douglas has also added an element of romance, but - sadly - it also didn't sit with me. This relationship between Amy and Daniel seemed so forced and unrealistic to me - Amy falls in love with him almost immediately, after one very uninspiring conversation, and she is the one initiating everything and in her mind giving birth to their children.

The lake, and also the cottage the women lived in, are separate characters in this story, and the descriptions of them both were really giving me the creeps. There was always this heavy, implying something atmosphere around the lake, and the house, with all the closed doors, cold rooms and creaky steps was not my idea of a cosy, welcoming home.

But nevertheless, even though it was not my favourite read, I still was able to see and appreciate a quality of this story - the beautiful writing, great storytelling and interesting plot, and I am truly looking forward to reading other Louise's books. She has also managed to transport me into the world of the characters, back in time to the village, such great the writing was. I welcome how the author mixed the paranormal elements with the family drama, and I am really sorry that it didn't work for me, but I am sure it can send a shiver or two down your spine. Louise Douglas has delivered a captivating, sophisticated and beautifully written story, a very complex, multi - layered one, full of twists and turns and I really appreciate this fact, as well as the tension being so palpable through the pages. full of secrets and lies - perfect for this time of the year.

Copy provided by publisher in exchange for a review.

Elaine says

This is a ghostly story which is completely addictive, one that really grabbed my attention throughout the whole of the read. Amy has been working as a nanny to the Laurent family in France, but when tragedy strikes the family is forced to return to the UK, to the humble Somerset cottage that Julia Laurent grew up in. It is a cottage that is hiding dark family secrets from 30 years ago.

The story is set on the banks of a reservoir, and the reservoir really dominates the whole read, providing a dark and gloomy wintry atmosphere of fog and rain. This really adds to the tension you start to feel when strange things start to happen in the cottage which are the catalyst for the old secrets coming to light.

I really liked the characters of Amy and Julia in particular. They are both well developed and Amy especially proved very surprising and just when I thought I had her pegged she showed a completely unexpected side to her personality on Christmas Eve. I also loved the way that the author showed Julia and Amy's relationship with each other. They have known each other for a long time and are very close friends but I really liked the subtle way the author very occasionally reminded us that in actual fact they are employee and employer.

The story does build slowly but this pace suits the tale that is unfolding. It is dark, spooky and really sent some shivers down my spine. In fact, it spooked me so much that I broke my own house rule last night and allowed my dog to sleep with me on the bed!

A fantastic read that I thoroughly enjoyed. Many thanks to the publisher via Netgalley for the review copy.

Mirela says

Odlično ispričana priča, prepuna misterije i zapleta. Knjiga koja se čita u jednom dahu. Uz savršeno odmjerenu dozu jeze koja vas prolazi sa svakom novom stranicom.

Dem says

3.5 Stars

This was my first Louise Douglas book and I was pleasantly surprised by the read.

A Family Tragedy, A Sister's Secret, a Web of Lies and A Spooky old house, all the elements of good fiction in my opinion.

I really enjoyed this novel although it did take me a little while to get into it but after a few chapters it had me engrossed with its atmospheric plot. It has that old fashioned style charm of good storytelling and surprising twists and turns that I find missing in a lot of fiction books of late. The writing is vivid and I loved the eerie feeling of the story. Characters are well drawn and the plot is suspenseful and kept me engaged throughout the whole novel.

I think readers of Kate Morton or Sarah Waters will enjoy this one.

Ana says

Originally posted on This Chick Reads

** Copy provided by the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review **

I can not believe I waited so long to read a Louise Douglas book! Everyone I know in the blogosphere was recommending her books! Now I see why all these people were mesmerized by Ms Douglas' writing!

'The Secret by the Lake' is a beautiful, breathtaking, complex story which got me hooked from the intriguing prologue. The story spans over 30 and more years and two generations of women, and involves several stories which are masterfully interwoven.

Amy's a nanny working for Julia and Alain, and taking care of their beautiful daughter Viviane. She spends years in France in their gorgeous house, however is forced to go back home when she hears her father is not feeling well. But things get bad for Julia and little Viviane while Amy is away, and after a terrible loss they need to go back to Amy's old house by Blackwater Lake, a house which was abandoned and holds some very dark secrets. Julia has not only lost her husband, but all her funds, so she really has no other option but to go back to the house where she spent the early years of her childhood and ask for Amy to come as she needs help. Amy's bond with Julia and Viviane is so strong, of course she decides she must help them, though she won't be paid as Julia is on the verge of poor. While these three women try to pick up their lives, the past is back to haunt them. Dark and ugly secrets will be revealed, and the truth of Caroline's (Julia's older sister) death which was kept under a mystery veil for so many years, will be brought to light.

This is one of these books that will have you hooked from the beginning and have you hold your breath as you turn the pages. There were so many times when I felt chills running through my body and sometimes it felt like I was listening to (not reading) the dialogue. The characters felt so real, I felt like they were in the same room with me, simply popping out of the pages, wanting to reveal their lives to me.

As this is the first book by Ms Douglas I've read, I can't compare it to any of her previous ones, but the writing though very very unique reminded me a bit of Kate Morton's in terms of the complexity of the characters and vivid descriptions. I spent hours in this cold, abandoned house by Blackwater Lake, feeling the mist and hearing the waves. I swear, when I closed my eyes I could picture the house and its cold walls, and even now days after reading it I can just close my eyes and think of Caroline and be transported there. AMAZING! Very rare and precious reading experience!

'The Secret by the Lake' is definitely one of the best books I've ever read. Right after finishing it I loaded my kindle with some of Louise's previous books and hands are already itching to make a start. Beautiful, mesmerizing, complex and haunting, 'The Secret by the Lake' is a book I recommend to everyone! It's a complex drama/mystery with a perfectly interwoven paranormal element, and everything flows with perfection. I'm still in shock with some of the revelations and the book was full of surprises and twists which I certainly couldn't predict. Such a clever, complex story and undoubtedly one of the best books I've ever read. Addictive, nail biting, exciting, poignant... this books is everything! Please, don't make the same mistake I did! If you haven't read Ms Douglas' books, you're really missing out on a fantastic, ubertalented author. Wholeheartedly recommend it! Easiest 5* ever and honestly, deserves all the stars in the sky. Just

read it, trust me you need this book in your life.

Paula Sealey says

I love Louise Douglas's writing and was really excited to read her latest offering, which, after finishing it, just confirms to me what a talented writer she is.

In 1960's England, Amy finds herself moving to Blackwater Lake to help out her former employer, Julia, and her young daughter Viviane who have fallen on hard times. Julia's childhood home in the village is bleak and rundown and when mysterious things begin to happen, Amy starts to uncover shocking details of a long hidden secret.

I was immediately drawn into the eerie environment which felt like it was set in a time much earlier than the 60's thanks to the secluded nature of the village and its residents. The tension surrounding the secret and its final reveal built nicely, and I had the chills a fair few times. Different from her previous works, but still highly enjoyable and beautifully written.

*Thank you to the publishers for providing a copy through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

David Reviews says

The Secret By The Lake was absorbing, haunting and hard to put down. A thoroughly good read with an excellent plot that I finished in a day. I thought the writing was well crafted and it didn't take me long to start to enjoy the company of the main character Amy. This is the first book I've read by author Louise Douglas and I wouldn't hesitate to recommend it or consider another of her books to try myself.

Amy is living in France and Nanny to the Laurent's and their 10 year old daughter Viviane. But sadly Amy has to return to England when her Grandmother requires nursing. She is reunited with Viviane and her mother Julia after a tragic accident as they find themselves in Julia's childhood home in Somerset. The place is set by the lake and the author draws atmospheric scenes of remoteness, swirling mist and dark waters. Julia's creaky cottage is old and in need of renovation but creates a place of creepy eeriness that holds family secrets from the past that come to light as ghostly happening begin.

Julia's older sister Caroline passed away at seventeen and Amy begins to uncover her story even though Julia and the villagers seem reluctant speak of her. What she gradually uncovers is frightening and left me desperately reading on to discover the mystery of Caroline's short life. I was on the edge of my seat as Louise Douglas brought the story to a climatic ending which was a thrill to read. This book has a bit of everything, creepiness, romance, mystery, intrigue and it's a little frightening too. I can only recommend that you read it for yourself.

Thank you to the publishers for a review copy of this book in return for an honest opinion.

Blair says

Just as I'd hoped, a mostly feelgood read (the conspiracy revealed during the denouement is rather grim) with mystery, romance and, as an added bonus, a generous helping of spooky stuff. I didn't expect this to be a ghost story at all, so it was a nice surprise to find that it really is.

Amy works as a nanny for a glamorous Anglo-French family, the Laurents, and lives a charmed Parisian life with them until tragedy strikes, they lose their fortune and are forced to return to Julia Laurent's childhood home - a dreary cottage sitting on the banks of an English reservoir. As Julia sinks into depression, Amy digs into her family's history and finds Julia's older sister, Caroline, died at the cottage when she was seventeen years old. Things get creepier when the Laurents' daughter, Viviane, starts claiming Caroline is her new imaginary friend and begins to repeat details about the girl's life (and death) she can't possibly know. It's all splendidly ghostly and makes perfect winter reading, what with the mist-shrouded, ink-black lake, the small-town intrigue and various inexplicable happenings in and around the cottage. Gothic references abound - the setting has a distinctly du Maurier-esque flavour, and then there's that yellow wallpaper in Caroline's bedroom...

The relationship between Amy and Daniel wasn't really to my taste - it's not so much insta-love as auto-love; after one glimpse of him and a distinctly uninspiring conversation, she's already imagining them having a future together. It was a bit too sweet. The other problem I had with the proof I read was that the punctuation was all over the place and there were typos galore. But the first is a minor thing, easily overlooked, and the second has nothing to do with the final published version (at least I hope). After the blip of *Your Beautiful Lies*, Louise Douglas has now been reinstated as one of my favourite authors of enjoyable, engaging comfort reading.

Joanne Robertson says

This is the first Louise Douglas that I have read and on the basis of this novel I would be more than happy to read another! It was a bit like a "lucky dip" read as I had no idea what type of book I would be reading and was pleasantly surprised by the eerie, ghostly goings on!

Having worked as a nanny to Julia, Alain and Viviane while the family lived in France, Amy has gone home to visit her sick father. An awful tragedy however means that Julia and Viviane also return to the UK, to Julia's childhood home by the lake. Amy returns to the family to help Julia, who now has no money, and Viviane but the 10 year old seems to have made a new "imaginary friend". Spooky goings on in the cottage soon start to resonate throughout the family and the whole village while the truth about a family tragedy 30 years ago is about to come to the surface.

I really liked the way this book surprised me and played out a plotline that I wasn't expecting. The author mixed a supernatural story with that of a family relationship drama and a love story and it all worked rather well! The presence of Caroline added extra layers to the atmospheric setting and I loved the way the story itself seemed reflected in the lake of the title.

I will definitely be looking out for other books by this author and really recommend this one for the cold winters evenings ahead.

I received a copy of the book via netgalley in return for an unbiased review.

Dannielle Potts says

My Second Louise Douglas Book And Again, It Didn't Disappoint. She's Such A Brilliant Writer. I Fell In Love With The Setting Of The Novel And The Characters, Although, The Main Character Made Choices At Times That I Didn't Think Were Actually Her

Trish at Between My Lines says

4.5 stars

Oh guys, *The Secret by the Lake* by Louise Douglas was a spine-chiller and a half! All the way though, I felt spooked and a dead giveaway was that the hairs of my arms were standing to attention.

FIRST LINE OF *THE SECRET BY THE LAKE* BY LOUISE DOUGLAS:

“It was a beautiful thing; a slender chain with a heart-shaped pendant – a ruby surrounded by diamonds set in a gold clasp in the shape of two hands, joined together.”

MY THOUGHTS ON *THE SECRET BY THE LAKE* BY LOUISE DOUGLAS:

I immediately clicked with this book when I started reading it. I liked the main character and I loved the affinity she had with children. When she has to leave her dream job to take care of a grandmother who never lavished attention on her, she did it without complaint. I loved her attitude and felt that her harsh childhood is a huge part of why she has so much to give to others.

I also liked that her childhood wasn't AWFUL, it just wasn't ideal. She didn't get outward displays of love or enough attention but she was loved. Her relatives just weren't great at knowing how to show or voice that love. I liked that we saw some different shades of families and that how they were just trying to do the best that they could.

And when Amy's former employers run into trouble and have to move from France to England, Amy is there for them too. They are now in dire financial straits and Julia is grieving the loss of her husband. Amy goes willing to their side and moves in to the VERY spooky, rundown cottage that they now live in.

The atmosphere was so eerie! Even when nothing was happening, I had the chills! The house felt sinister and I wouldn't have stayed a single night under its gloomy roof. The furniture was old-fashioned, the paintwork was dark and grubby and it sounded like it needed a good clean. That I could deal with. But when the unexplainable noises start, the dragging sounds on floors, the loud thumps. Yep, I'd have been gone!

When I started the book, I really liked it. But the more I got into it, the faster and faster I had to read. The pace really intensified as the story unravels and I read the whole thing with a 24 hour period as I had to see it though asap.

There is also a cute romance that is very much a sideline story as the main plot is the haunted house and trying to discover the secret of the lake. I did really enjoy the romance though; it adds hope and light to an otherwise dark and sad story. I wasn't surprised at the direction the book took and I don't feel it's meant to be an unpredictable read. I could see where it was going but the journey of getting there was really

entertaining.

Overall I loved it, the characters were well-developed and the setting was alternatively exciting/scary/sad. This was my first Louise Douglas book and I immediately went and added all her previous books to my to-read list.

WHO SHOULD READ THE SECRET BY THE LAKE BY LOUISE DOUGLAS?

I'd recommend this to you if you like well-developed characters, small village settings and lots of spooky goings-ons! Fans of *Touched* by Joanne Briscoe or *The Orphan Choir* by Sophie Hannah should also enjoy this one.

Thanks to NetGalley and Random House UK for giving me a copy of this book in exchange for an honest, unbiased review.

Beadyjan says

This haunting, dual time period, romantic mystery beguiled me throughout, it has everything the discerning reader could wish for in a captivating and intriguing new novel.

Brimming with hidden secrets, family tension, and the overwhelming sense of something nasty lurking underneath the surface this book is narrated by Amy, with a patchy childhood herself she has always sought to belong and when she landed a job as nanny with a wealthy family in France it became not merely a job but a whole new life and family to belong to and cherish.

Returning home to the UK to visit her ailing father out of a sense of duty more than familial love, she doesn't hesitate when she receives an urgent summons from her former employer Julia to whom tragedy has befallen. She drops everything to join Julia and young daughter Viviane in a tumbledown cottage overlooking a lake where Julia lived as a child with her hapless, misfit sister Caroline, an upbringing no more love filled than Amy's own.

What Amy finds is a fractured family living in near poverty in a dilapidated house where a young woman once lived and died in mysterious circumstances and a close knit rural community reluctant to let go of the past.

She also finds love and her own inner strength as she tries to uncover the truths about what really happened to Caroline.

Set mainly in the 1960s it captures the essence of buried small town secrets, the closeness of a rural community and a creeping sense of apprehension, desolation and imminent

The whole book simmers with mysteries, camouflaged secrets and deeply shrouded unpleasantness that has been buried for years, as Amy begins to peel away the layers, the messages which are revealed are about to release unexpected corruption and depravity.

I loved the progressive sense of malignance and the ethereal quality of the brooding lake and the spectral brooding presence of the much maligned Caroline.

I'd like to add my thanks to Louise Douglas and her publishers Black Swan for providing me with an advance copy to read and review.

Janet says

I've not read anything by Louise Douglas before and this was not a bad read at all.

Amy is a nanny working for the Laurent family in Paris. Her charge is young Viviane, a delightful little girl who takes great pleasure in the simple things in life and adores her time with Amy. Sadly tragedy strikes and the Laurents and Amy are forced to move back to Somerset in England. To a childhood home of Julia Laurent, Amy's employer which is next to a lake. What follows is a ghostly tale of secrets, lives lost and relationships made. It's a well drawn out story with some good characterisation with the lake itself taking centre stage. It's a mysterious place that is still, dark and fog covered one minute and light reflecting a myriad of colours the next.

The story unfolds slowly and though the book has a supernatural element, I actually didn't find it haunting in the 'being spooked' sense. From early on I suspected where it was all heading and, rather than being spooked, I was team 'ghost' all the way along. Rooting for scrapings at windows, writings on walls and ghostly imagery. The story needed to come out somehow and how else does a ghost make its presence felt? In fact, I actually found it frustrating at times that they wouldn't listen!

Overall it's not really anything I haven't seen before but it engages the mind enough to want to keep reading as you get to know the characters and their individual stories. The romance for me that was included was a bit sudden and a little clichéd but I guess in and amongst all the darkness that this book had it did provide some light.

The Story By The Lake is seeped in sadness and cruelty and though obvious suspicions may arise there's no satisfaction for knowing what they might be more a relief that some kind of justice is prevailed in the end.

Many thanks to the author, publisher and NetGalley for the ARC. Good storytelling and one I recommend.

Irena says

'Secrets make you lonely, did you know that?'

'I never thought about it,'

'Oh they do. It's their nature to isolate a person. Making someone keep a secret is the same as building a wall around them. Sooner or later the person behind that wall wants to set themselves free.'

What is the cost of the truth behind a lie?

What is the cost of the secret that's hiding the truth?

If you ask me what was it I expected when going into this story, I probably wouldn't know what to tell you. But I can tell you one thing: I know **I got more than I expected.**

This story, written in the first person and taking place in 1960th, follows a young woman named Amy. She finds herself in a small Somerset village, taking care of a little girl named Viviane who recently lost her father. It is not an unfamiliar fact that Viviane likes to have imaginary friends. After their arrival, Viviane can't stop talking about her new friend, Caroline, who has the same name as Viviane's mother's sister who died 30 years ago. Not only that she has the same name, but she also knows things from Caroline's life that no one else but Viviane's mother would know, and she never talks about Caroline. Suddenly, strange things start to happen in the house and Amy can't help but wonder if Caroline is real.

This book took me by surprise. **After finishing it, I needed some time to think about it, to sleep and clear my mind.** My emotions are still all over the place and I know I just can't write a review good enough to do justice to this story.

The writing style is amazing and it is full of visuals. I couldn't help but imagine shadows of gray covering pictures in my head, playing a movie that gave me chills and kept me on the edge because I didn't know what will come from the story.

It was like watching The Ring, only different. The atmosphere was similar, but the plot, characters and message were different.

The message. It is the most precious thing about this novel. If I tell you what it is, I would spoil your potential reading experience, so I won't.

But I will tell you this: If you have a chance, give this book a chance.

If you do that, I guarantee you that **it will keep you awake, it will make you think about monsters**, but not the paranormal ones. **The real monsters that live among us and can destroy many lives.** It is our responsibility to stop them.

Note: I got this book for free via netgalley in an exchange for an honest review. Thank you Random House UK.

Read this and more reviews on my blog: <http://bookdustmagic.wordpress.com>

While reading

I am over one third in the book and the story gives me the creeps.
