



## The Prodigal Sister

*Laura Elliot*

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## **The Prodigal Sister** Laura Elliot

Can a black sheep ever return to the flock? Find out in this emotionally intense tale from a spellbinding new Irish talent. Accompany the Lambert sisters on their unforgettable journey -- fans of Anita Shreve and Rosie Thomas will be spellbound. When 15-year-old Cathy Lambert runs away from her Dublin home, she is scared and pregnant. Settled in New Zealand with her new son Conor she believes the secret she carries will never be revealed! Rebecca Lambert was eighteen when her parents died and she took responsibility for her younger sisters. Years later, she is haunted by fears she hoped she'd conquered. Freed from family duties, mother of three Julie Chambers is determined to recapture the dreams of her youth. Married to a possessive older man, Lauren Moran embarks on a frantic love affair that threatens to destabilise her fragile world. Anxious to make peace with her three sisters, Cathy invites them to her wedding. But as the women journey together through New Zealand towards their reunion, they are forced to confront the past as the secret shared histories of the Lambert sisters are revealed

## **The Prodigal Sister Details**

Date : Published (first published January 1st 2009)

ISBN :

Author : Laura Elliot

Format : Kindle Edition 416 pages

Genre : Womens Fiction, Contemporary, Fiction

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## From Reader Review The Prodigal Sister for online ebook

### Pam says

#### Made Me Long for Sisters

I have a very small family .... just one brother. This helped me understand the bonds, the laughter and the sorrow that can be so deep between sisters. This is a great story about love and deceit and secrets that exist and what it can do to siblings. Each character had their equal time for development and it was great to get to know them all. Laughter and tears and hope abounded. Thank you for a great read.

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### Barbara Nikola says

#### Boring

Page after page of letters written by a child to her dead mother. How can you get interested in a novel that is half letters?

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### Carmen Blankenship says

The Prodigal Sister is a not a bad premise but the writing was a little long winded in some areas. To be completely honest I skimmed. A lot. I just didn't connect.

Thank you Netgalley for the advanced copy in exchange for this honest review.

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### Nina Fralick says

The story line of 4 sisters that were left to cope after their parents died drew me in. This book was not as well written as some of Laura Elliot's other books. It was a struggle to finish reading.

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### Elizabeth (Thoughts From an Evil Overlord) says

#### MY SYNOPSIS

The four Lambert sisters lost their parents in a car accident when the eldest, Rebecca, was only eighteen years old, and Cathy, the youngest, nine. The most visibly affected is Lauren, who was in the car with her parents and suffered significant physical injuries. When she returns home from an extended hospital stay, she is withdrawn and rarely speaks. As time goes on more emotional issues come to light. Julie dives deeper into her music, trying to get her band on the road, where she can spend all her time with her boyfriend, Paul. Rebecca struggles for years to keep her family together and have her sisters complete their educations, even as she gives up her own dream of college and veterinary school. When Cathy is fifteen she runs from her

family, first to London and then to New Zealand, where the story opens fifteen years later as Cathy approaches her family for a reunion. In addition to the third-person narration, the story is told through therapeutic letters Cathy writes to her parents, and Rebecca's journal. The reason for the estrangement is slowly revealed as Rebecca, Lauren, and Julie prepare for their journey across the globe to attend Cathy's wedding and meet her fifteen year old son, Conor.

### MY THOUGHTS

For what could have been a depressing or upsetting story, *The Prodigal Sister* had many funny scenes and interesting things to learn as the sisters travel around New Zealand. I got to know Rebecca and Cathy better than Lauren and Julie, probably because about half of the story is told in their voices through letters and a journal, and the conflict is ultimately between them. For me, Lauren is the most enigmatic character. On the surface she is all about a life of ease and luxury, but inside she is torn apart, which manifests in acting out in a variety of self destructive ways that she keeps quiet until there is a crisis. Julie is easy to like and sympathize with, as she skips school and tries to spend all her time with her boyfriend, reactions to the death of a parent that are typical, yet not extreme like Lauren and Cathy.

The sisters' road trip in a caravan/RV across the South Island of New Zealand is a travelogue of Laura Elliot's own trip to New Zealand, which inspired the setting for the novel. The women hike along the Kaikoura Peninsula, and boat on Lake Tekapo. I learned about the Cardrona Bra Fence, and enjoyed the funny scene when the sisters decide to contribute their own bras to the display. The descriptions of the beauty of New Zealand are awe inspiring, and I want to visit Cathy's fictional Havenwalk spa for a pampering, contemplative vacation right now!

*The Prodigal Sister* would make a great book club read, because it is easy and quick, yet has many elements that can trigger discussion, such as sister relationships, death, family reunions, adrenaline-junkie sports, judging people by what you see, just to name a few.

I received an advance copy *The Prodigal Sister* from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Jane Roberts says**

#### **Sisters**

This book was a bit confusing at the beginning but was really enjoyable. Sisters argue but are still there for each other when needed. Definitely looking forward to any other books written by Laura.

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### **Amber says**

#### **Forced and awkward**

While the characters drew me in and kept me reading, the writing is forced and awkward. Too much is unsaid or glossed over.

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## **Marcee Feddersen says**

<http://www.anurseandabook.com/2016/02...>

This book came right when I needed it. I've been a little resistant to my blog lately, because I've been feeling like reading was work vs. fun. Then I opened this book and fell right into the story of four orphaned sisters.

A lot of times, books aren't able to skip through time well, but this story followed Cathy's life from age 5, when her parents died all the way through adulthood, and I really didn't feel like any part of her journey was skipped. I knew her as a sad child writing letters to her mother in heaven, then as an awkward pre-teen who morphed into a Goth as a way to belong, and then as teenage runaway, then finally as a stable, yoga loving mother.

For me, Cathy was the main character, but looking back, any of the sisters could be your main character, because all of their stories were given time and attention.

I read *A Stolen Child* last year and I really enjoyed it. But this one just cemented Laura Elliott as a go to author for me. She reminds me of Lianne Moriarty in her ability to write about women who persevere through life even after bad things happen. The story and characters are relatable, but in the end, always inspiring.

Right now two of her books are free on Kindle unlimited and two are \$2.99! It's the perfect time to try her!

So this is a gift that book blogging has given me, an author I may never have read otherwise.

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## **Nesta Tuomey says**

*The Lost Sister* caught and held me right from the beginning. So much so, having finished this remarkable book, travelled so far with the Lambert sisters since the time of their parents death in a car accident until they set out together some twenty years later to journey to New Zealand for their youngest sister's wedding, I must confess to feeling acutely lonely for them all. Rebecca, Julie and Lauren have not heard from Cathy, since she ran away from home aged fifteen. When they receive a phone call from her asking them to attend her wedding in New Zealand they are unable to refuse this olive branch and, with mixed feelings, decide to go. So many questions need answering, so many personal issues to settle.

Beautifully written with a wonderful mix of poetry, music and depth of feeling the author brings us back in time using the medium of letters from the eight year old Cathy to her dead parents - touchingly addressed to Nirvana - which allow the reader come to know the child and her older sisters, the terrible loss and upheaval they experience in the aftermath of the tragedy.

Rebecca, the eldest, takes responsibility for her younger sisters' welfare even though her actions and decisions sometimes made her unpopular with them. On arriving in New Zealand this role is still hers as she makes them keep to their tight schedule while covering huge distances of this immense country packed into the cramped quarters of a camper van. They combine travel with sightseeing and we come to know not only about the Lambert sisters and the tensions between them with past hurts and grievances sometimes bubbling to the surface, but the spectacular landscape and the fascinating ethnic lore. But this is a close loving family who have shared a lot and survived in a fashion. The darkness of the past, with its secrets and betrayal, while

always in the background there, nevertheless, exists great affection between them. There are funny moments bonding them even closer - like urging each other to go with the flow and discard their bras following the example of travellers before them and to tie their bras to a fence festooned with garments of every size and colour.. Bikers arrive on the scene and Julie and Lauren rush to take cover behind the camper van. Rebecca, the only clothed one, draws the men off and makes them tea in the camper. When her sisters finally emerge they take it in good part. There are even romantic encounters on this journey that might result in worthwhile relationships and time for the sisters to explore their strengths and weaknesses and face up to certain issues. When the sisters finally reunite with Cathy at Havenswalk old memories are painfully revived and searing self-knowledge experienced. As the drama unfolds, the past revisited and painful issues faced there is the hope of better, happier times and more honest relationships between them in the future. Very enjoyable book. Highly recommend.

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### **MISS K A SMITH says**

#### **Amazing read !!!!!!**

Really enjoyable read.

I have never read anything by Laura Elliot but looking forward to another chance to. Will pass this on to others to enjoy also.

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### **Leah says**

When Carla Kelly marries Robert Gardiner after a whirlwind romance, their happiness is complete when Carla discovers she's pregnant. Tragedy strikes two days after baby Isobel is born, though, when Isobel is snatched without reason. Meanwhile, Susanne and David Dowling are celebrating the birth of their miracle child Joy. However Susanne is hiding a terrible secret and in her bid to keep her secret a secret, she rears Joy in near-isolation. As Carla and Robert begin the search for their daughter, their marriage begins to crumble under the strain. Carla refuses to move on, believing that her baby is still out there somewhere, waiting for her to find her. As the years pass, Carla's determination to find her daughter never wanes, despite the dwindling hope whereas Susanne carries on rearing Joy by shielding her from the world. As secrets come to the fore, can either mother find the strength to face their demons?

Stolen Child is Laura Elliot's second novel under that name but she's had many books published under her real name of June Considine. I picked up her first book under the name of Laura Elliot, The Prodigal Sister, last year but I haven't yet gotten around to reading it. When I saw the synopsis for Laura's second book Stolen Child, I couldn't wait to read it. I've read a few books about missing children - the one that stands out is Little Miracles by Giselle Green - and they intrigue me, not to mention we're always hearing about children going missing in the news, so it's interesting to see how authors tackle such a subject.

I don't want to spell it out, but I think it's kind of an open secret what happens to Carla's baby; the blurb on the back of the book is told in such a way that it kind of gives it away. It's not a problem, because that's probably not the issue. The issue is how long it all spans out and how deep each person involved gets in the whole thing. I liked how both stories of both women run parallel to each other and they almost blend into one. There's Susanne's story of joy, of hope, of knowing that despite the odds, she has her miracle baby, despite the dubious circumstances within which she 'got' her daughter. And then we have Carla's despair and

determination; her despair at the loss of her daughter and her determination to find her baby no matter what. As Carla searches and searches, we see as Susanne tries hard to keep her secrets secret, and the two such contrasting stories blend so well together. It must have been fairly hard to pull off two different set of emotions and two different writing styles, but it's done with aplomb.

I must admit I'm finding it very hard to articulate fully what I thought of the characters. On the one hand, I can understand absolutely everything Susanne does but on the other hand it disgusts me so much. I think we're past the point where I just can't not mention the fact Susanne stole Isobel. And how can I ever like someone who is willing to do something so so terrible? Yet I could, in a totally strange and surreal way, empathise with her plight. I don't agree with what she did, but I could feel for her and she didn't seem too terrible a person. I know she stole another person's child and that does automatically make her terrible, but excluding that, she didn't seem too terrible. I didn't like Carla in the beginning, I thought she enjoyed the publicity and everything surrounding herself and her pregnancy was a bit full on. But after Isobel goes missing, and Carla sees just how invasive the press and media can be, and she realises just how much she hates it, I began to like her a bit more. Not many people would have the will to go on after a child goes missing, particularly after the police even give up, but Carla's determination was admirable. That, there, is what made me like Carla, the fact that she so strongly believed her daughter to be alive, made her for me.

The book doesn't just revolve around Carla and Susanne though, there's also their families and the plot definitely has wider implications than you might expect. There's Susanne's husband David as well as Carla's husband, Robert, and it's Robert and Carla who are hit the hardest. A missing child will do one of two things: bring you closer together or tear you apart and for Robert and Carla it was the latter. Then there's the wider families, the parents of all four characters, and siblings. The damage was far, wide and lasting, that's for sure. Even Joy, Susanne's daughter, is affected and the way she is with her parents, in particular her mum, was shocking at times. That's who I felt for the most because Susanne, despite all I've said, did seem to be a bit of a control freak when it came to Joy.

Stolen Child is definitely a slow-burning read and there isn't much in the way of action but I quite liked the pace of the book. I did want some more revelations to come out and I was itching for it all to kick off but on the whole I enjoyed the read. The book stands at a mammoth 500 pages and you're definitely in it for the long haul. There are a few twists on the way to the end, one in particular I didn't see coming at all. Despite it's relatively slow pace, I did manage to immerse myself fully in the book and the easy reading style certainly helped move the book along. There were a few twee parts but on the whole it was a great read. The book is recommended to fans of Anita Shreve and Rosie Thomas, although I've never actually read either of their books so I have no idea if that's a valid recommendation, but if you like Giselle Green's books or Louise Candlish's books then Stolen Child is probably one you ought to pick up.

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### **Karen says**

When I downloaded this book it was 'The Lost Sister'. So when I went to add it to Goodreads as 'reading', I couldn't find it listed ?

'The "Prodigal" Sister' is a much more apt title.

When the Lambert sisters' parents are killed tragically 18 year old Rebecca is left to care for her 3 sisters Julie, Lauren & 9 year old Cathy.

Cathy writes to her departed Mum daily, weekly, monthly and then not for many years so the main character is very much Cathy.

Cathy runs away to New Zealand via London at the age of 15 and deliberately chooses not to keep in touch

with her sisters. 15 years later she contacts them to invite them to her wedding. Rebecca feels so hurt and doesn't think she can ever make amends with Cathy so takes some time to decide if she'll make the trip to NZ with the girls. The 3 sisters hire a camper van once they arrive. Rebecca is still the boss. She's planned the itinerary with military precision and keeps them all in check!

They eventually arrive to Cathy's, each having gained &/or left some 'baggage' behind en route. There follows a lot of soul searching. Throughout the book, each sister goes on an emotional journey and question so much of what they've become or appear to be.

Thinking back on the book having finished it two days ago, I couldn't recall Julie's name or much about her. Whereas the other 3 characters are much stronger. But then in any family, all the members have different level of character.

Laura Elliot writes with a wonderful understanding of the relationships between sisters and then add in the extended relationships- husbands, partners and children and how these other people affect those siblings they're not directly related to.

The author also brought us on a wonderful trip in that camper van, I'd say making many of us either envious of that journey around the south island of New Zealand ?? or us adding it to our bucket list.

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### **Renita D'Silva says**

An absolutely beautiful book that explores the relationships between sisters, the tragedies and travesties and coming of age of girls adrift without their parents to guide them. I love Laura Elliot's prose, it is assured and stunning, creating a haunting picture that stays with you long after the last page. I loved each of the sisters and especially Rebecca. Love the way the author manages to delineate each sister, their flaws and their loves, their emotional struggle, their feelings and their disparate lives, so they come alive on the page. This is a book that will stay with me for a while, one I will read again the more to savour the prose. I love the author's descriptions. They made me want to go to New Zealand, travel the country in a camper van. I lived this book and highly recommend it to everyone.

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### **Dorie - Traveling Sister :) says**

This is a novel about four sisters who are left to fend for themselves after the death of their parents at an early age. Rebecca is the oldest and found herself in the role of surrogate parent while she was just in her teens. This was a challenge that she accepted and looked out for her three younger sisters, Lauren, Julie and Cathy as best she could.

The first part of the story is told in the letters that Cathy, the youngest sister at age 8, is suggested to write to her "mother in heaven". At the same time Rebecca is writing in her diary. So we are getting feedback from the oldest and youngest. The letters and journal were able to convey the feelings and thoughts of these young girls as they grew older. There were parts where I, as a mother, really felt the longing and pain that they were going through. The death of their parents was so traumatic that it defined their personalities.

At 15 Cathy runs away from home, unable to tell her sisters the secret that she believes would destroy their lives. She makes sure that they will not be able to find her.

Fifteen years later she gets in touch with her sisters to invite them to her wedding in New Zealand.

Lauren, Rebecca and Julie decide to make it a long trip in a camper through many beautiful parts of the country. They all are hiding secrets that they don't want to share. The places that they visit are well described and I enjoyed reading about all of their adventures. During this same portion of the novel we meet Conor, Cathy's son. He has been anxiously awaiting the arrival of his aunts as he has never had any family besides his mom and just recently his father.

When they finally reach Cathy's home and "nature spa", there are many feelings shared and secrets brought to light. We finally get to know Cathy and her son Conor.

This book is about family, love, loss, independence, acceptance and so much more. I think the author's strongest skill lies in her ability to really make us experience the emotions that the characters are feeling. This is a very good story that I feel would be a good choice for book clubs with lots to discuss.

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### **Lolly K Dandeneau says**

This is the story of the Lambert sisters who lost their parents tragically. Rebecca tries her hardest to keep the remains of her family together, her three sisters. Rebecca is only a teenager herself and yet does the best she can. The sisters live all fork off into different directions, with pregnancies and other secrets- the youngest runs off to New Zealand when she is only 15 and pregnant. She starts a new life holding fast a secret, doesn't contact her family for 15 years when she decides to invite them all to her wedding, and to meet her son. Naturally not everyone has an open heart and arms. Prodigal Sister indeed!

The story goes back and forth between the past and present, and while I found the letters Cathy wrote to her mother in heaven a sweet touch- at times it bothered me. I think it's more my personal taste to just dip into the dialogue, maybe a few less letters would have been more to my liking. I tend to dislike the back and forth between past and present but it was still a good story and well written. I wasn't thrilled with the endings, I expected a more earth shattering secret and to run off for so long? Rebecca was the sister I liked the most, but the others didn't seem as developed to me. A good story about sisters, but I wish it turned out differently.

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