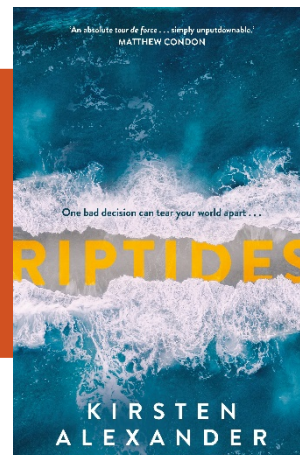




# Riptides

Kirsten Alexander



## Author Background

Kirsten Alexander is the author of two novels, *Half Moon Lake* and *Riptides*. *Half Moon Lake* was longlisted for the Ned Kelly Awards in 2019 and the Sisters in Crime Davitt Awards in 2020.

Kirsten is currently writing her third novel.

Kirsten is also co-founder of the short story site Storymart and was co-founder and editor of the three-volume digital journal *Open Field*.

Kirsten has worked as a nonfiction book editor, copywriter (in-house four years for Aesop, also for Crumpler, M.L. Vintage, House + Universe), and article writer (for the *Age*, the *Daily Beast*, *Notebook*, the *Melbourne Weekly*, *Atticus Review* and many others). She's worked as a reviewer for ABC Radio National's *The Book Show*, a magazine section editor, and content manager for several websites.

Kirsten was born in San Francisco, raised in Brisbane, and lives in Melbourne with her partner, two sons and two dogs.

## Book Summary

December 1974. Abby Campbell and her brother Charlie are driving to their father's farm on a dark country road when they swerve into the path of another car, forcing it into a tree. The pregnant driver is killed instantly.

Abby and Charlie make a fateful decision. They flee, hoping heavy rain will erase the fact they were there. They both have too much to lose.

The siblings decide to keep their crime hidden from their family and closest friends. But the truth is more complicated than they realise. The driver had secrets of her own. And the police have a curious connection with her...

Set in Queensland in a time of tremendous social upheaval, *Riptides* explores the push-pull of family, dreams, and other people's expectations. It asks: what is it that you really want from life, and what is it you deserve?

## Discussion Questions

- ❖ Abby and Charlie take a calculated risk in the first chapter to save themselves and their families, careers, and dreams. How did you judge them for that choice initially, and did your judgement of them change by the end?
- ❖ A riptide is a fast-flowing current that can take swimmers out to sea. How do riptides, both literal and figurative, work their way through the novel? How do characters navigate the dangers that riptides pose to them?
- ❖ Joh Bjelke-Petersen was premier of Queensland from 1968 to 1987 and is remembered for his deeply conservative policies. *Riptides* is also set during the three-year tenure of the progressive Whitlam government. How do these competing political influences play out in the lives of Abby and Charlie?
- ❖ Natural disasters such as the Brisbane flood and Cyclone Tracy play a decisive role, particularly in Abby's life. These are moments of terror and crisis, but also provide opportunities for courage and solidarity. In what ways did these events feel like historical snapshots and/or relevant to today's news?
- ❖ *Riptides* is very much a novel about Brisbane: the river, the suburbs, the proximity to beaches and hinterland, and its subtropical climate. How does the Brisbane of the 1970s resonate with your own memories of the city?
- ❖ Charlie's experience of Bali takes place at the very beginning of Western exploration and development of the island. How does the Bali of the early 1970s, as described in the novel, compare with the Bali we know today?
- ❖ What did you make of the relationship between Skye and Finn? What did you make of the relationship between Skye and John, Abby and Charlie's father?
- ❖ Based on what we hear from various characters, what do you think was happening at Eumundi? Do you think it was a utopian commune, a dangerous cult, or somewhere in between?
- ❖ Abby's yoga teacher tells the class, 'Entrust yourself to the waves.' What does she mean by this? How does one learn to trust the waves?

## References

- ❖ Kirsten Alexander: <https://www.kirstenalexander.com/about>
- ❖ Kirsten Alexander: <https://www.kirstenalexander.com/riptides>
- ❖ Penguin: <https://www.penguin.com.au/book-clubs/2521-riptides-book-club-notes>