

BOOK CLUB NOTES



THE DROWNING GIRLS

VERONICA
LANDO



THE DROWNING GIRLS

Cast a stone. Aim true. Let her sink.

Nate can't believe he's dragged himself up to this backwater town. Port Flinders would have fallen off the map years ago, except for one thing. Tourists flock to its mangrove-lined shores for the annual Drowning Girl festival: sacrifice a girl at sea, and the fishing hauls that keep the town afloat will prosper. Or don't and the whole town will sink.

But it's just a legend, a gimmick. Everybody knows that.

As fireworks light up the night sky, a woman's body is pulled from the inky waters of the gulf. Shock waves threaten to tear Port Flinders apart when she's identified as Kelsey Webb: a local teenager thought dead for twenty-five years.

As Nate tries to find the truth about what happened to Kelsey, he uncovers a string of deadly accidents over the decades. All women. All drowned. And always during the festival.

In his search for answers, the legend of the Drowning Girl begins to take hold of Nate, weaving its way into his head and threatening to pull him under, and he begins to question which sacrifices are truly necessary.

VERONICA LANDO

Veronica Lando is an Australian crime writer with a taste for the quirky and creepy. Growing up in a flat above her parents' Melbourne book shop, she feels as if she were born with words running through her veins, waiting to explode out onto the page. Now, living in Queensland, Veronica likes to use the uniquely wild and dangerous landscapes of the north to shape her stories.

She enjoys writing plot-driven stories that grab the reader at the first sentence and don't let them go until the final full stop. She believes each chapter, each character interaction, and each unwritten word, should ratchet up the tension. Veronica won the 2021 Banjo Prize for Fiction with her debut, *The Whispering*.



PRAISE FOR VERONICA LANDO

THE DROWNING GIRLS

'Eerie, atmospheric and addictive, *The Drowning Girls* shimmers with gothic tension' [Candice Fox](#)

'Lando grips and holds the reader underwater - the characters' nightmares of the drowning girl are palpable and the story is claustrophobic, despite the vast ocean nearby. This novel is for readers who love to delve into Sarah Bailey or Chris Hammer's mysterious, complicated histories, or swelter in Candice Fox's oppressive Queensland heat.' [Books+Publishing](#)

'*The Drowning Girls* weaves superstition, small-town tensions and past deeds into a close, suffocating tale infused with the heat and humidity of far north Queensland.' [Maryrose Cuskelly](#)

'Tropical Noir is a thing and Veronica Lando has it in the bag! A twisted tale of a desperate town, buried secrets, superstition, folklore, and murder set against a vividly realised Gulf Coast landscape that pulses off the page.' [Dinuka McKenzie](#)

'Sophisticated prose, a setting that felt like I could reach out and touch it, and more twists and reveals than I could imagine - Lando's writing sucks you in and doesn't let you go.' [Mercedes Mercier](#)

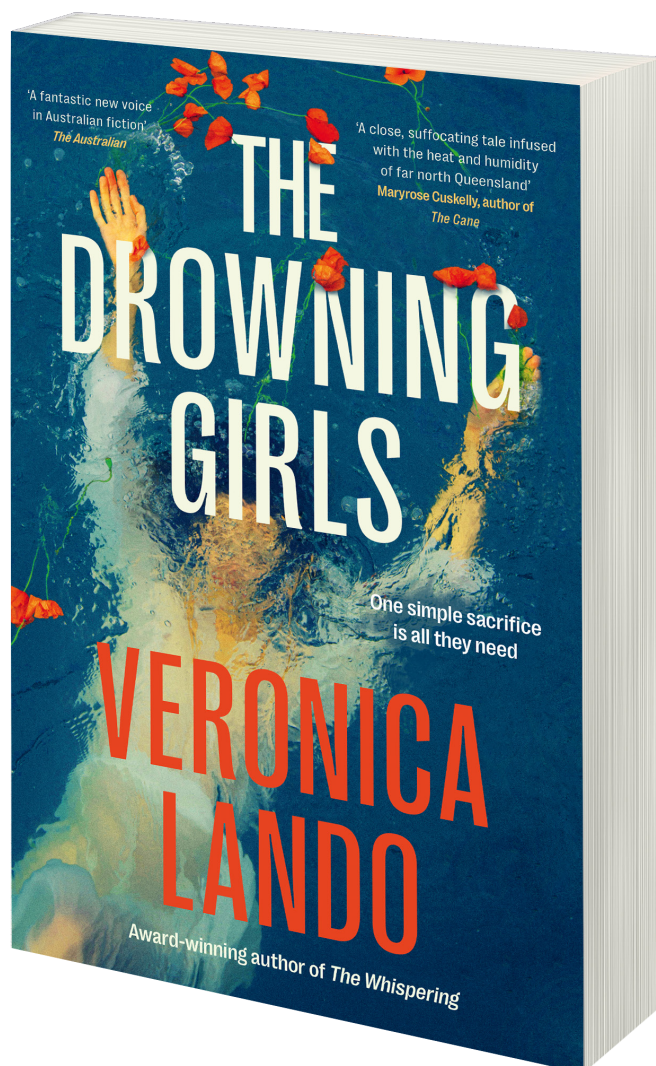
THE WHISPERING

'A fantastic new voice in Australian fiction'
[The Australian](#)

'*The Whispering* has everything we've come to expect from Australian rural noir in the way of climate and landscape, characters, hidden truths, and unpredictable plotting. Lando has cleverly woven an intricate and multi-layered story into a gripping mystery told with skill – and a good dose of obligatory treachery! I devoured it.' [Lyn Yeowart](#)

'Fans of Jane Harper will love Veronica Lando's debut crime thriller, *The Whispering*.' [Mamamia](#)

'Unpredictable, gripping, atmospheric and eerie ... the perfect read to curl up with in bed late at night.'
[Pedestrian](#)



An underwater photograph showing a hand holding a red flower, with other red flowers and green stems visible in the blue water.

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

1. *The Drowning Girls* is set against the backdrop of a festival where hundreds of tourists flock to celebrate the symbolic drowning of a woman. Do you think that this is a realistic theme for a festival in today's day and age and, if so, what do you think the implications are regarding society's behaviour towards women?
2. Do you feel that the opening prologue for the book did an adequate job of setting the tone for the novel? Did the book meet your expectations that were set based off these opening two pages?
3. Nate forms a strong friendship with Irena and feels protective towards her. Do you think theirs is a fair representation of a platonic friendship between a man and woman in the twenty-first century? Or do you feel that Nate is overly concerned for Irena's wellbeing and is not giving women the credit they deserve in terms of their judgement and ability to fend for themselves?
4. Half way through the story, we learn that twelve-year-old Tack is in fact Nate twenty-five years earlier. Did you see this twist coming and do you feel that the author was successful in pulling it off, or did you feel cheated once it was revealed?
5. Dale Boyd is portrayed as the story's main antagonist. Do you think this is a fair title for him? While Dale was a bully as a teenager, do you feel that he absolved himself by guarding Kelsey's secret for many years?
6. What other antagonists can you identify within the story? Are there other characters, plot points or setting elements that also carry the characteristics of the adversary?
7. The book is set against the mangrove-lined shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Did you find that the mangroves were symbolic within the story? That the twisty roots may have been a metaphor for some of the plot elements?
8. The Drowning Girl legend is representative of the decline in the fishing industry due to environmental factors. Do you feel that the book fairly addresses the concerns around the impact of environmental decline on such industries?
9. Did you find the ending where Nate sacrifices himself to save Irena believable, given he'd only known her for one week? Do you think that this was Nate's way of clearing his guilt about what happened to Mads when they were children?
10. Given that the epilogue reveals that the legend of the drowning girl is real, do you feel that there is space for a sequel to this book? If so, who do you think would make the best protagonist and why would you chose them to drive the story?