



## The Silk Thief

*Deborah Challinor*

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## **The Silk Thief** Deborah Challinor

1830s Sydney Town - blackmail, friendship, bar brawls, romance, tattoos, gin and much more - is brought vividly to life as fiesty prostitute Friday, naive seamstress Harrie and cunning thief Sarah try to make their way as transported convict women.

1831: Assigned to a good family in Sydney Town and now learning the art of tattoo, convict girl Harrie Clarke is still haunted by the horror of the brutal murder she and friends Friday Woolfe and Sarah Morgan committed the previous year.

Powerful and vindictive criminal Bella Jackson continues to demand money in exchange for her silence regarding their crime. And just when it seems that Harrie and her fervent and long-time admirer James Downey might finally be united, an act of pure nastiness severely threatens their chances - and Harrie's life.

When things go from bad to much, much worse for Harrie, everyone who loves her must do their utmost to save her. But Friday, in love at last, is battling demons of her own, and Sarah is forced to lie low for fear of attracting the attention of the police. Who will be the one to rescue Harrie?

## **The Silk Thief Details**

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Author : Deborah Challinor

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## From Reader Review The Silk Thief for online ebook

### Moira says

1830's Sydney town is so vividly alive in these books but the research is not labored. The three women are very interesting (and contrasting) characters. The men do not fare so well. Adam is not just "cardboard" he's a wet piece of paper: he doesn't come alive at all and he could have been SUCH a fascinating character. The dog has more personality.

One quibble about this very entertaining book. Writing a series requires the skill of keeping the threads of the plots in mind for the reader. I find myself asking, "Who is this?" Where did they come in?" and trying to remember a particular storyline quite often.

Nevertheless, the author is commended for strong women characters in a very strange and vivid time in history.

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### Robyn Gibson says

1831...Friday, Sarah, Rachel and Harrie are transported from London to Sydney Town as convicts to be assigned to free people to serve their sentence as maids, prostitutes, cooks, etc. They did something on the ship on their way to Sydney that will hang over them for a long while and are being blackmailed for their actions. Their friend Rachel died in childbirth, having been raped by a low life man on the ship so the girls want payback for what that man did.

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### Brenda says

Gentle Harrie Clarke felt like she was coming apart at the seams; haunted by the earlier actions of her friends, Friday Woolfe, Sarah Morgan and herself where a man had died (admittedly he had deserved it), she couldn't stop her thoughts going there continually. Her guilt was eating her up and blackness was creeping into her soul. To take her mind off her troubles, Harrie agreed to learn the art of tattooing when local tattooist Leo offered her the job. She was to practise on Friday, but Friday knew that Harrie's work would be impeccable – her art was unique; her tattoos would reflect that.

Bella Jackson, now a high-brow brothel owner in Sydney Town, had first met Friday, Sarah and Harrie on the *Isla* when they were all transported to Australia in the 1830s for various misdemeanours; they all hated one another – Bella was vindictive and cruel plus she was blackmailing the girls. But murder and mayhem was rife on the streets of Sydney Town and when it connected them all, the consequences were dire.

Then when things couldn't possibly become worse for Harrie – they did. Her devastation was immense; she felt herself losing touch with reality and didn't bother to fight it. Would grief and torment always be a way of life for Harrie Clarke, or would her friends (who had troubles of their own) be able to unite and save her? And what would be the outcome?

Oh my goodness, I LOVE this series!!! *The Silk Thief* by Aussie author Deborah Challinor was completely

and absolutely amazing! Historical fiction at its best; and with the distinct Australian flavour makes it so much more delectable. Highly recommended, but please start at book #1.

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### **Jenelle says**

Absolutely loved this book. Another great book by my favourite author Deborah Challinor. I think this saga gets better with each book released. Can't wait for the next one to come out.

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### **Lyn Ford says**

Loved, loved, loved it!! I have been hanging out to read the 3rd book in the Convict Girls series, and I was not disappointed.

I can't wait to see what unfolds for Friday in the next book in the series and sadly it will be the last

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### **PattyMacDotComma says**

4.5★

Another enjoyable chapter in the long-running saga of the brave convict girls, fighting their way to a new life in the rough world of early 19th century Sydney.

The remaining three of the four young girls who were transported from England have settled into different roles but have maintained their close connection with each other. The orphaned baby daughter of the extremely fair, sunny fourth girl is in care back at the Female Factory, the place they all fear being sent back to if they don't please their masters as well-behaved assigned convicts should.

They are saving as much money as possible to support Rachel's baby, but they are also having to support a blackmailer, which is testing their resolve and their friendship.

Friday is still the voluptuous, titian-haired whore who is irresistible to the clientele and who spends her spare time slugging back gin and fighting in pubs. Not an altogether wholesome soul, but a very lovable roguish one, and her madam, Elizabeth, is quite happy with her, eventually becoming a bit of a confidante.

Sarah's not as light-fingered as before, and isn't hiding her safe-cracking self in the shadows at the moment, as she's found stability and a home with Adam, to whom she was assigned and is now married. She's still a great lock-picker, which she puts to use.

But Harrie, who was the silk thief, transported for theft, is completely unstable, hallucinating, and basically off her trolley. This is her story, and her collapse is devastating to her friends and the doctor who adores her but whom she won't speak to. She has her reasons, as you will see.

The bond between the three girls has strengthened through their previous deadly activities (anyone who falls foul of them bloody well deserves it!). Their arch-enemy is still the mysterious Bella Shand, swathed in

glamorous garments, plastered with make-up, and running an illegal bawdy house.

Bella is blackmailing them for a particular murder she is aware of, but Bella herself seems to be at some risk of falling foul of the Maoris, whose ancestors' shrunken heads she's been smuggling from NZ and selling in Europe.

We are also treated to a gorgeous Maori princess who captures a surprising heart.

The girls' secrets are gradually being shared with those whom they hope they can trust. Early in the book, Leo, the tattooist they've befriended, has been given a note by Bella for the girls. He knows one of Bella's henchmen has been murdered and suspects the girls know something about it. He asks for an explanation, but Friday refuses.

He then shows her the note.

*“ ‘Is that from her? To me?’*

*‘Yes, but you’re not getting it till you tell me exactly what’s going on.’*

*Friday put her face in her hands. God. Their secret was starting to seep out like whey from a cheese press. Forced now to say something, she admitted that they were making regular blackmail payments to Bella.”*

And so it goes, leading into the last book of the series, A Tattooed Heart

Good fun.

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### **Rhonda says**

Well written but sometimes repetitive and slow. 3.5 Stars

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### **Steve says**

Much like the previous two books in this series, I could not put this down for love nor money. Reading about my home city through a tiny veil of poetic license is a little addicting. The story picked up immediately after the previous book ended, which was wonderful, since I don't think I couldn't take any more suspense there. There wasn't really a climax as such, but the plot twists and developing story were lovely. There was a tiny tiny resolution, but I'm going to have to endeavour to read the last in the series very soon.

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### **??Jülie ? says**

The Silk Thief by Deborah Challinor

Loved, loved, loved it!! I have been hanging out to read this 3rd book in the Convict Girls series, and I was not disappointed.

Deborah Challinor has delivered another riveting read which seamlessly follows on from her previous two in this series.

This is my favourite genre, and Deborah Challinor is at the top of my list for favourite authors in this genre. It is clear to the reader that she has done her homework and it pays off. She has proven to be a master story teller of historical fiction.

These books just go from strength to strength, cleverly building on an already solid foundation yet still managing to inject surprise and further intrigue with every chapter.

The story follows on from the previous book/s seemingly without interruption, and the reader is quite quickly embroiled once again in the lives and issues of these \*girls as, daily, they face their demons. \*see previous book reviews for fuller description.

I love the characters in this series, they are so very well developed and grow accordingly with the passage of time. This makes them feel so real, its like I know them and care about their wellbeing, so that I look forward to each new book with much anticipation.

I was so sorry to come to the end of this latest book, but was excited to find that there will be a 4th book in the series... I can't wait to get my hands on that one!

Highly recommended 5★s.

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### **Kathy says**

Deborah Challinor is an absolute Gem and The Silk Thief is the third novel in a series of convict girls in Sydney which is just fantastic. I have loved every single page of this series and I have picked up the fourth and last book as soon as I finished this one to stay in a historical world that you can touch and smell, totally immersing myself in Australia's history. As the story continues of three young girls who were transported to Sydney as convicts we come to love each one as our own friends as the girls suffer hardships and triumphs together. Highly recommend this amazing series. 5++

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### **Jan says**

Supplied by HarperCollins New Zealand for review

Friday, Sarah, and Harrie are convict girls in 1830s Sydney, bonded out to work as servants and earn their keep. Friday works as a prostitute, Sarah has married her jeweller husband and helps run his business, Harrie is a domestic now learning the art of tattooing.

After Walter killed the disgusting Amos Furniss in the last book, he needs to disappear so the girls and Leo, Harrie's tattooist boss, book him passage on a ship bound for England. He has to hide for a few days before sailing so Friday secretly stashes him in her madam's basement, where he makes a shocking discovery.

After Adam's release from gaol, he and Sarah give up their side business of being jewel thieves and

concentrate on legitimate business. Harrie is given the chance by Leo to learn to use the needles and uses Friday to practise on. She's still seeing Rachel though, and is haunted by the killing of Gabriel Kemp.

Then things get bad and Harrie needs saving. Friday is in love and battling her own demons, while Sarah is lying low to avoid attracting police attention. Who will rescue her?

Sydneytown comes vividly to life, you can see it, smell it, and get an idea of how hard life was then. A few questions were answered with the plot moving swiftly and providing some revelations, while new questions were raised. The previous two books really should be read to provide background, though just enough information is given if you haven't read them.

I love this series! It's so addictive and thrilling and I'm anxiously waiting for the release of The Tattooed Heart, the fourth and final book in this quartet.

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### **Jo Rushby says**

The Silk Thief is the third novel in this series of convict girls in Sydney.

I really love Deborah Challinor novels. Her Historical scenes are accurate for the time it is set.

Looking forward to the last novel of this series to be published.

If you love historical fiction this one is a must.

It continues the story of three young girls who are transported to Sydney as convicts. The girls suffer hardships trying to survive and become lifelong friends.

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### **Therese Noble says**

I wanted to read a novel set in Sydney in the 1830s, which is why I chose this one. I didn't realise it was the third in a quartet.

Challinor's research is wonderful and her characters are endearing. I think my disappointment might lie in the fact that I needed to read the first two because I really missed a 'real villain' in this novel. I'm sure the other two novels have the evil I was hoping for. It was certainly suggested. This is Harrie's story - a victim of so much of her past tragedies that she suffers a sort of early nineteenth century PTS. Harrie is essentially a very good person - a ticket-of-leave convict - who suffers because of a shockingly guilty secret and the fear that the truth will be discovered and that truth will hurt her friends and well as her. To anyone who enjoys this context I would recommend this book but I would suggest reading the first two beforehand.

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### **Janine says**

It has been a while since I read the first 2 books in the series so it took a bit to get into this one but once I did it was a good read. Looking forward to the final book in the series.

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## **Jeanette Lewis says**

The senses are taken on a journey right from the beginning of old Sydney Town 1831 and it is not a pretty picture. It seems that the Brits simply duplicated cities like London and Liverpool into the new colony, the filth, open drains, sewers and rough life. It's no wonder that the city just grew without little planning and narrow streets. This story has many colourful characters and secondary connections that make it a delightful and interesting read. In the main it revolves around 3 women, friends since their time on the convict ship and incarceration in the female gaol (the "factory", which manufactured cloth). The three women are bonded in the story, Harrie is bonded to assist as a housemaid, child carer and cook. She is fortunate to be in the services of a caring couple, mainly Nora the wife who has strong feelings for this girl who suffers with depression, guilt and is delusional. To add to Harrie's plight she is raped and suffers further health and mental problems from the abortion that takes place. It's not until the end of the book for Harrie to accept that Dr James Downey loves her and she eventually marries him. Sarah is bonded to a jewellery merchant and is married to him. She isn't as strong a character but appears to be the most level headed. The last of the trio is Friday and what a character she is. Bonded to a hotelier which has a secondary function as a brothel, which beggars belief that the authorities turned a blind eye to, maybe because many in authority frequented the brothel? To add to the colour of Friday she is a gay woman, something that would be more unacceptable during these times than prostitution. What is interesting and heart warming is the sense of community from these hardened people, there is nothing "gentille" about them. To add to the melting pot to this story is the blackmailing of these 3 young women due to a murder that has taken place for which is in retaliation of another death. Even with the dreaded thought of being returned to the factory isn't enough to stop these 3 desperate women breaking the law in their fight for survival.

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