



The Teacher's Secret

Suzanne Leal

A teacher with something to hide and a new principal determined to uncover the truth.

It's a new school year and Terry Pritchard, Assistant Principal at Brindle Public School, can't wait to see all the kids again. But things are different this year. There is a new principal at the school and she wants him gone.

Set in a small coastal community, Suzanne Leal's second novel explores the lives of its residents as they struggle to cope with life when forced to give up the things they most cherish.

As the narrative of her novel unfolds and secrets are exposed, Suzanne explores the complex issues of loss of identity through the personal stories of her characters: Terry Pritchard faces the loss of his life's work as a teacher; Rebecca Chuma tries to adapt to a new country while negotiating the difficult path to gaining asylum; Nina Foreman struggles to cope as a single mother while managing the challenges of a new school and a hostile classroom.

Amidst their difficulties, Suzanne's characters gain support from surprising places. There are people in the community to be trusted and, ultimately, there is hope within the confusion of life.

Although the story and the characters in *The Teacher's Secret* are fictional, Suzanne drew inspiration from her work as a lawyer in child protection and refugee law, as well as from her experiences as a French teacher and parent at the local school of the small coastal community where she lives.

Suzanne's insight into the heartache of marriage breakdown and the difficulties of single parent families comes from her own experience of finding herself separated with three young children to raise. "I found kindness from unexpected places within my community; from the school, from people I barely knew. It was this experience of support and empathy during a difficult time that sowed the seeds for *The Teacher's Secret*."

SUZANNE LEAL is a lawyer experienced in child protection, criminal law and refugee law. A former legal commentator on ABC Radio, Suzanne is a regular interviewer at Sydney Writers' Festival and other literary functions. She has been a judge for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards and for 'The Nib' Waverley Library Award for Literature. Suzanne's first novel, *Border Street*, is based on the wartime experiences of her Czech-Jewish neighbours and was commended in the Asher Literary Award. *The Teacher's Secret* is her second novel.

Suzanne Leal is available for interview. www.suzanneleal.com

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