



Baggage

Emily Barr

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From the award-winning author of Backpack comes a novel about renewing old friendships and finding the answers to life's most baffling questions where it is least expected.

Baggage Details

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Asghar Abbas says

Meh. It was rather boring. It was nice learning about the Australian outback and that the place MC was staying in, the houses had to be underground. I thought that was cool.

C!NDY L00 says

I really enjoyed Emily Barr's previous best selling novel Backpack. Therefore, I looked forward to reading Baggage. Baggage did start out very promising, but started floundering miserably toward the middle.

The story is about Daisy or Lina (as she is now known) who has been a fugitive for 10 years from England, but now living in Australia with her husband (of three years) and her 10 year old son. Lina is pregnant and living a fairly good life in Ozzyland up until the day she runs into her former best friend Sophie from the UK, who is backpacking through Australia. When her friend recognizes Lina as Daisy, Lina naturally denies being Daisy. But she doesn't fool Sophie who goes back to England to inform her journalist boyfriend, Jerry that she had run into the notorious Daisy on her trip. He of course knows what this story would do for his career

I was thinking of the many possibilities of how this story could have developed. Unfortunately, by the time I got to the middle of the novel I began to wonder whether or not the author had lost all her enthusiasm for writing it. I know I was losing my enthusiasm in reading it. I sensed no direction with a lot of unnecessary false twists and turns, which only annoyed and frustrated me. Furthermore, there could have been more character development. It would have been nice to know a little more about the dynamics of Daisy's family in England and Lina's new family in Australia. I felt nothing for these people and had very little sympathy for Lina/Daisy throughout. For example, I got confusing messages about her love for her husband Tony. I eventually came away with the thought that he was just a safe and convenient cover from her criminal past. In addition, the author never explained why she had such a contentious relationship with her family in England. We never really get to know these people or much about Daisy other than the crime she committed.

The book has two principal narrators which I generally dislike in a novel, especially when one of the main characters are so unlikable as that creepy reporter, Larry. I had no interest in his love or sexual life either. I felt his private life added nothing to the storyline. nevertheless, I carried on hoping perhaps there would be some unexpected developments. But, in my opinion, that never really happens. In fact, when I read the last page I was sure the book gremlins had made off with the last few chapters of my copy. For me, this is a story with no meaningful conclusion.

Moreover, I felt the author didn't really care for the story or the characters in the end and suspected her readers wouldn't either. On the strength of her best selling first novel, she might have signed on with her publisher to pump out X number of new books to fulfill a contract. However, whenever this happens the results are usually disastrous as I felt this story eventually and sadly turned out to be.

Apé says

I only read this because I had a copy in the house and I am on a mission this year to read as many of my to-be-read books as I can. But it's my third Barr book and I just don't like her anymore. The first book I read was also her first, *Backpack*, which I actually rather enjoyed. Then I read the *Cuban Heels* one, which suffered from the same problem I had with this one. I get the impression Barr's gone through a few years of pumping out children, whilst she's been writing these books, and has decided to put lashings of these experiences into her books. I picked her books up because I thought they were light summer reads with travel and slight mysteries. I don't enjoy books about women bleating on and on about being pregnant or living with babies. Funny really, because the tag line on the front of the copy says "Too much? Just dump it...". Indeed!

This is light fluff chicklit with best-friend chats and as mentioned before, lashings of pregnancy stuff. It's "travel" because it's set in the Australian outback and people travel to get there and it's a sort of human dilemma mystery. All the Australians in this book are portrayed as raging alcoholics. Having never been down under, I don't know what it's like out there. The story is about pregnant Lina, a wife and mother living in a tiny place called Craggy Rock in the outback. A backpacker, Sophie, turns up, and is convinced that Lina is actually Daisy, her old best friend from the UK who committed suicide over 10 years ago (body never found). And guess what - she's right!

Unfortunately for all concerned, Daisy fled her old life because she was facing prison. And Sophie's boyfriend is a journalist who has the morals and ethics of... well, he doesn't have any. So as soon as he's on the scene, he has no scruples about dumping Sophie and flogging his story to the papers back home. Which then brings in the media circus, which is rather horrific, but realistic in how the affected people are treated. So there are plenty of selfish, arrogant characters in this book.

I can't say I liked it or enjoyed it that much really.

Kristen says

It was very interesting, but at the end, it seemed like the author had to finish it by a certain date and just threw it all together...

Vera says

Leuk geschreven maar langdradig.. op een gegeven moment is de spanning wel beetje verdwenen en is einde redelijk voorspelbaar.

Lilacwhisper says

E' un libro che mi ha decisamente incuriosita, al punto che l'ho finito in un giorno, facendo pure le ore piccole per sapere come andasse a finire :)

Ho pensato per gran parte della storia che il libro si concludesse in modo positivo, invece il finale è

decisamente aperto, ma devo dire che non stona, anzi, forse rende la storia un po' più realistica, considerando tutti i vari colpi di scena che si susseguono (personalmente, quello che mi ha lasciata maggiormente di stucco è stato quello relativo alla storia di Red).

Ho letteralmente odiato il personaggio di Larry, e la fine che (forse) fa al termine del romanzo è a mio parere più che provvidenziale. E' un personaggio viscido, opportunista e falso che ho sentito di odiare fin dalla sua prima comparsa. Diciamo che la mia idea dei giornalisti ha coinciso in modo imbarazzante con l'immagine di Larry e di certi suoi colleghi.

L'unico aspetto un po' deludente di questo libro, secondo me, è l'immagine dell'Australia che ne emerge. Se Renmark tutto sommato si presenta molto bene (anch'io vorrei vivere su una barca!), Craggy Rock già dal nome si presenta come un posto orribile. Ma davvero c'è gente che riesce a vivere senza finestre in un dugout? E gli australiani sono veramente ubriaconi, maneschi e rozzi come appaiono qui? Beh, se mi dovesse basare su quanto letto, parrebbe di sì... forse un bel viaggetto nella terra dei canguri potrebbe rivelarsi utile da questo punto di vista :)

Mandy says

Gripping read.

Amanda says

One of my American friends here lent me this book because she thought it was good, but after attempting to get through it bit by bit for about 4 months now, I can honestly say it's trash. It's chick-lit at its worst, with a cross-continental scandal of friends with a secret past and a journalist boyfriend who will do anything to uncover the secrets of the two in hopes of getting his big break. Yawn.

Nick says

I liked it-a little slow in the beginning but then began picking up pace-ending surprising the way things worked out.

Chris says

I liked it. It was a fun read, not too taxing, with a little bit of mystery and scandal thrown in. I liked how all the characters related to one another, and I enjoyed how Lina/Daisy and Sophie regained their friendship. The only part I didn't really like was the ending. I thought the device of using a letter to explain all the loose ends was sort of a cop-out, and tied things up too tidily. Not perfect, but enjoyable.

Sharon says

This was her second novel after the brilliant Backpack. It has many of the same similarities as the other two

novels I have read of Barr's – Backpack and Cuban Heels. In none of her novels do I particularly warm to the main character. Yes they have their issues and problems but they come across as quite harsh, albeit strong, characters. But on saying this, it doesn't matter at all to the enjoyment of the books, in general the thrilling storylines and the blend of supporting characters more than makes up for my lack of empathy for the protagonists.

Baggage follows Lina, who was once a professional dancer but who got caught up in a scandal as some drugs she purchased for her friends turned out to be less than pure and two of them died. Rather than face the consequences, she panicked, faking her own suicide and she fled to the other side of the world – a remote Ozzie opal mining town in the outback called Craggy Rock. Here she has forged herself a new life with a son, husband and another baby on the way. But as we all know, the past never stays hidden, and Lina's best friend from back in London bumps into her on a backpacking trip. This kicks off all manner of problems as her friend's boyfriend is a journalist – and an unscrupulous one at that – and he tricks both his girlfriend and Lina. He is a despicable character and not caring about anyone's feelings but his own, he is hell bent on getting the story of the year. The narrative flits back and forth between characters and time frames a lot and as this is not seamlessly perfected it does break up the flow a little. The hiding out from journalists parts does seem to drag a little and I feel this is not Barr's best, but nevertheless it is an entertaining little novel written in Barr's recognisable style. The ending is left a little ambiguous and may not be to everyone's cup of tea if you like things neatly wrapped up.

chucklesthescot says

Lina is living in a small Australian town, pregnant to husband Tony and enjoying life in the outback despite dreading going to the wedding of her best friend's ex-husband to her 17 year old student. It is at the wedding she comes face to face with a backpacker called Sophie who recognises her as her old friend Daisy, who everyone thought was dead. Daisy fled England before her trial for her part in the drugs deaths of 4 people. When Sophie tells her boyfriend back home, his reporter side kicks in and Lina finds the media camped out at her home. Life will never be the same again.

It wasn't really my kind of book. It was decent in some parts but most of it just dragged along with obnoxious characters all trying to get the big scoop. Too much of the fighting and journalist's sex life but not enough of Daisy's back story to keep me interested.

Kate says

Lina Pritchett's life is centered around hiding her new pregnancy from her husband's family until they are ready to tell, her son Red, and her mother-in-law Margot, as well as her career as a teacher in a tiny town on the Australian Outback. One of her former students has run off with her best friend's husband, the big scandal in town. At a wedding for the two, Lina is started to run into Sophie, a backpacker from England who is sure she knows Lina as her old pal Daisy from ballet school back in Devon. Ten years earlier, Daisy was accused of a terrible crime and committed suicide in the midst of the ensuing media melee. Or did she?

This was a really great women's suspense type of book. Written in such a way that you know that Lina is Daisy and that she was not entirely guilty (one of those shades of gray type of deals), the suspense centers around her getting caught, and what will happen to the life she's so carefully protected for the last ten years. Can a person be rehabilitated, and is forgiveness possible? I loved that it wasn't grisly, that it was very

human, and exposed the frailties we're all vulnerable to as thoughtless careless youths (granted, we aren't all mildly responsible for poisoning four of our best friends). How Daisy deals with being discovered and how it affects the people around her makes for compelling reading.

Alison says

I loved the idea for this book - especially considering I'm from Adelaide in Australia, which isn't too far from where she sets up her new life!

I also enjoyed the fact that there were two narratives to the book, and that at least one of them wasn't whom you would have guessed! (normally it's told from the 'main characters' point of view, and one of the narrators to me, isn't one of the two major characters.

Whilst I enjoyed this book, and definitely praise Emily Barr's writing style (every one of her books I've read I haven't been able to put down, always wanting to 'know what's next') but the content of the book feels a bit short for me. Some things I felt were missing a little (For example, I would have liked more explanation of Daisys background incident to be honest - yes it was explained, but I wanted more!)... and the 'what happens next' part felt like it was left open ready for a sequel, but from what I can tell there isn't one which is a bit upsetting (I know why authors do this, to leave it up to the imagination, but at some point that feels more like a cop out for an unfinished story - which is how I feel about this). I also felt there was a lot more room for further character development - would have loved to have known more about Tony, Sophie and Red for example :)

I know that's a lot of negative feedback, but it wasn't all bad. The writing style was great, and it was a great idea, I liked the characters (other than Larry and Christie!), I loved the mental images I got, and as always I love getting a story from different perspectives :)

There was also a bit towards the end of the book that REALLY took it down a notch or two for me... considering it's on the last few pages, it does contain a spoiler!! So don't read if you haven't read the book yet.

(view spoiler)

Kim Roger says

Feeling underwhelmed. Emily Barr is a bit of a hit or a miss I find. This was definitely a miss.

There was so much potential to this storyline and yet it was like the author got distracted halfway through but decided to finish it anyway without much thought or passion.

With the exception of Sophie who seems like a lovely, supportive girl I didn't really care about any of the characters. I felt like some of the sub-plots were kind of random (Larry's in particular) and it was all just a bit of a yawn fest for me.
