



Season of Shadow and Light

Jenn J. McLeod

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Sometime this season...

The secret keeper must tell.

The betrayed must trust.

The hurt must heal.

When it seems everything Paige trusts is beginning to betray her, she leaves her husband at home and sets off on a road trip with six year old Matilda, and Nana Alice in tow.

But stranded amid rising floodwaters, on a detour to the tiny town of Coolabah Tree Gully, Paige discovers the greatest betrayal of all happened there twenty years earlier.

Someone knows that truth can wash away the darkest shadows, but...

Are some secrets best kept for the sake of others?

Season of Shadow and Light Details

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Author : Jenn J. McLeod

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From Reader Review Season of Shadow and Light for online ebook

Carol - Reading Writing and Riesling says

My View:

A beautiful Australian narrative full of larger than life characters, wild and glorious countryside, horses, romance, secrets, love, connections , family and a fantastic message about acceptance - there is a little something in this book for all to enjoy.

There is a beautiful passage in this book that sums up love and acceptance remarkably well, Alice is talking to Paige about Alice's relationship with her mother Nancy, 'No labels Paige, remember. It was your mother who hated them. She never referred to herself as anything other than a woman who feel in love. It so happened to be with another woman. It might have easily been with a man, she told me once, insisting, "Love is about connection." '

What an important understanding.

Rowena Holloway says

4.5

With her third stand-alone novel Jenn J McLeod delivers another sweeping tale of family secrets and the healing power of the country.

When her young daughter, Matilda, wants to know more about the grandmother who died thirty years ago, Paige seizes the opportunity to escape her disintegrating 'perfect' life and discover more about her dead mother's past. Nana Alice, Paige's adoptive mother, reluctantly joins the road trip, terrified the secret she promised to protect will be exposed. Her fears deepen when bad luck and bad weather see the trio trapped in the tiny town of Coolabah Tree Gully—because this town holds a secret that could destroy Paige and everything Alice holds dear.

With Season of Shadow and Light, McLeod takes us away from Calligary Crossing, the setting of her first two novels, and creates another small country town with inquisitive locals more than willing to look after the strangers trapped in their small community due to rising flood waters. Primarily narrated by Paige and Alice, there are also point of view chapters from delectable chef Aiden, a kindred spirit with his own ghosts to bury, and the mysterious Rory. There is a lot packed into this novel and I occasionally lost sight of the main story line: the mystery of Paige's mother. Still, as with any McLeod novel, it's a pleasure to get lost in the words thanks to her descriptive powers and wonderful ear for dialogue. Paige is a sympathetic character and her daughter is adorable, yet it is Alice with her secrets and complexity I found most compelling. This is a novel in which to immerse yourself. There is plenty to keep you guessing and lots of lively characters to entertain.

Redolent with an Aussie culture and language fast disappearing beneath the flattening of cosmopolitan life, Season of Shadow and Light confirms McLeod is fast becoming an important chronicler of Australian life.

Thanks to Simon & Schuster Australia for an advance review copy.

Shelleystrae at Book'd Out says

"Light can illuminate truth, let us see things we might otherwise unknowingly pass by in the dark. It can also illuminate the signs that will allow each of us to find the road to forgiveness, to trust, to hope, to belief and to the future."

An engaging story of secrets and lies, of trust and betrayal, of family, friendship and forgiveness, Season of Shadow and Light is Jenn J McLeod's third novel of contemporary fiction set in rural New South Wales.

Unhappy and frustrated after a difficult few years, Paige Turner decides to take her six year old daughter, Matilda, and mother, Alice, and spend two weeks in country New South Wales. Their destination, Saddleton, is determined by signage visible in an old photograph of Paige's mother in her youth, but rising floodwater results in the trio becoming stranded in the tiny town of Coolabah Tree Gully. Though Paige is content to enjoy the hospitality of the generous locals who offer the family a place to stay, Alice is increasingly anxious. Coolabah Tree Gully is home to a secret Alice has kept for decades and, should it come to light, has the potential to destroy everything she holds dear.

The story of Season of Shadow and Light unfolds primarily from the perspectives of Paige and Alice, two richly drawn, complex characters confronted with a legacy of secrets.

Paige has had an extraordinarily difficult time recently. A late term miscarriage was followed by a postpartum stroke, leaving her with physical deficits and destroying her career as a food critic. Learning of her husband's infidelity pushes Paige to the breaking point, motivating her to escape to the country with her daughter and Alice. Paige choose Saddleton as a destination with the vague notion of tracing the origins of a photo of her mother, Nancy, unwittingly ending up in the town her mother fled in the dead of night almost forty years earlier. Paige of course has no idea about her mother's past, but nevertheless feels incomplete.

"I lost the things that made me who I am, the things that made me feel complete as a person. You know that jigsaw puzzle Mati has - the one with the missing pieces we searched high and low for that day? That puzzle is me. There are pieces missing, and I don't mean my sense of smell and taste. The fact I can't explain what I feel frustrates the hell out of me."

Alice has been Paige's sole parent since the death of Nancy, her partner and lover, when Paige was ten. Aware of Nancy's hidden past, Alice had promised never to reveal the truth of it to Paige, but stranded in Coolabah Tree Gully it becomes harder for her to determine exactly who she is protecting, especially when she is confronted with the consequences of keeping it to herself. Alice really struggles with the thought of not only betraying Nancy, but being held accountable by Paige.

"An improbable set of circumstances.

An impossible situation.

How long could she hold on to the truth? Should she hold on?....Was she obligated to protect the deceptions of the dead when the truth might somehow help the living?"

A low key element of romance is introduced by Aiden, a local man recently returned from Sydney, 'cheffing' in the local pub, his own future in tatters after being betrayed by his ex-girlfriend. He is attracted to Paige, who appreciates the attention given the state of her shaky marriage, and eventually proves to be a link between Paige and her mother's secret but to be honest I thought Aiden's point of view, shared in brief

chapters throughout the novel, wasn't really necessary.

Through her characters McLeod explores issues such as miscarriage, stroke recovery, infidelity, identity, same sex partnerships, and organ transplantation. The larger themes of the novel examine the nature of loyalty, trust, deception and betrayal. Suspense stems from the nature of the secret that Alice is keeping and the anticipation of Paige learning it. McLeod skillfully teases out the details of Nancy's hidden past but I did feel there were times when the narrative stalled briefly, repeating Alice's angst and Aiden's upset a little too often.

“Love is about connection.” says Alice, and Season of Shadow and Light is a story about connections - between partners and lovers, between parents and their children, and between siblings - tested, sometimes frayed and weakened, but strengthened by forgiveness, trust and love.

Helene Young says

I've finally had some time to myself to finish Jenn J McLeod's latest release. With Season of Shadow and Light she's crafted another heartfelt story with memorable characters, an evocative setting and plenty of twists and turns in the plot to keep me guessing. She tackles difficult themes with a deft touch. You won't be disappointed.

MarciaB - Book Muster Down Under says

I've been a fan of Jenn J. McLeod since her very first book in the Seasons series, House for all Seasons which preceded Simmering Season and I always get so excited when I hear that she's got another novel coming out, hoping that I'm going to catch a glimpse of some of the characters I've met along the way.

Season of Shadow and Light certainly doesn't disappoint and, whilst I didn't quite get the glimpse that I was hoping for, the little town of Coolabah Tree Gully (as with Calingarry Crossing) shows that Jenn has a talent for creating vivid fictional worlds, with her characters being ones we can relate to as she ever so skilfully depicts the highs, lows and mostly complicated relationships between them as they juggle and deal with the lives that she has created for them.

For those of you who haven't yet read any of Jenn's novels, please be assured that there is no need to read these in order and they can quite easily be read as stand-alones!

Paige Turner's life is a little bit weird at the moment. Suffering with the effects of a stroke which has left her with sensory deficiencies and partial numbness down her left side, depression after the loss of her second child, a marriage she's fast losing her grip on, the effects of a brief encounter with a stranger at a shopping mall and the discovery of an old photograph, she decides to take Nana Alice and her six year old daughter, Matilda, on a road trip.

Only, the old photograph harvested from Nana Alice's belongings, along with fate, seem to have other plans for them when their lack of directional focus finds them stopping in Coolabah Tree Gully. With inclement

weather setting in and the creeks rising, there's no way they're getting out of there any time soon.

The townsfolk, although in Paige's eyes, a little strange, welcome them with open arms and warm hospitality and, as she continues to contemplate her marriage and other deeply held desires, she begins to find a sense of peace, belonging and the hint of a better life for her and little Mati. She just can't understand why Nana Alice, who has always only wanted the best for her, is so persistent about getting out of there so that she can mend her relationship with Robert.

Over the two weeks of their temporary tree change, Jenn slowly begins to unravel the biggest secret of all by offering us timely tidbits of information shared by her characters, thereby enabling us to begin putting the pieces of the puzzle together. But, when trouble comes to town, Paige and Alice will find themselves facing-off against the biggest lie of all and we, as the reader, can only hope that things will work out in their favour!

Two things that draw me into a novel are character and emotions and Jenn never disappoints me with hers. Weaving a tapestry of complex relationships, lies and deceit in her palette of summery colours, Jenn has lovingly imagined an array of characters whose narrations are vitally important in telling this story. Their emotions and secrets will pull at your heart-strings whilst their own hearts take a pummelling when that elephant in the room rises up to threaten everything they hold dear.

Paige, richly drawn with many facets, has to dig deep on this journey of self-discovery and I could so relate to her as she searched for that sense of belonging. Aiden injects a fantastic dose of quick-witted humour into the narrative and I found myself giggling at some of the things he said, such as "*I'm thinking you might find your feet doing a Fred Flintstone if you don't ease up on those imaginary brakes*" and "*That woman can round up a mob of beer-swilling boys faster than any kelpie I've seen working the yards at shearing time and make them move on command*" whilst Alice annoyed me intensely with her self-centeredness in terms of her loyalties.

Whilst on the subject of characters, I'm not usually one for a plot with a young child in it because throughout my years of reading, I have come across authors who just don't get the balance right, tending to "lose" their young characters when other more important plot strands gain momentum in their narratives. Jenn, however, should give lessons on how to incorporate child characters as Mati comes to life with her deft hand!

Touching on themes of depression, loss, identity, infidelity, alternative lifestyles, family dynamics, deceit, betrayal, family discord, secrets and lies and ultimately love, Jenn writes scenes that deliver an unforgettable emotional impact.

As always with Jenn's novels, Season of Shadow and Light is tightly plotted and perfectly paced, abounding with twists that will lead you first in one direction but will soon have you changing focus as she skilfully ratchets up the intrigue and keeps you guessing right up until its cracker of an ending.

Beautifully written, poignant and seasoned with both shadow and light, this is a story, not only about dealing with the choices we've made along the way, the repercussions of lies kept and the manner in which they can affect the next generation but one of hope and second chances.

Do yourself a favour and "come home to the country"!

Sally906 says

I have been seeing author Jenn J McLeod's name being bandied around various book forums and blogs for a wee while now – always with great positive statements. So when I got the chance to review **SEASON OF SHADOW AND LIGHT** there was not one hesitation before jumping at the opportunity. And what a great story it is too, I became totally immersed.

Paige's perfect life is disintegrating – she had a late in pregnancy miscarriage, which triggered a stroke, and her sense of taste and smell have gone which leads to her losing her job as a food critic. Now she has discovered her husband was unfaithful. She may be well off and living in an upper middle class suburb with a wealthy husband. But she is not happy. When she finds an old photo of her now deceased mother, Nancy, she tracks down the small country town that the snapshot may have been taken at. Paige then decides to take a break and books a cabin next to the river in the town. Her aim is to find out more about her mother – as her early life is a complete mystery. Paige is puzzled by Alice's totally negative reaction to this plan, but goes ahead anyway. A change in the weather and rising floods leave them marooned in Coolabah Tree Gully instead and the scene is set for past secrets to start unravelling. The reader does learn a few of the truths; however some of the details are not connected until much later in the book leaving the mystery ticking along nicely.

Even though Paige is the main character and the story is about her search for the truth about her mother's past, which also creates the suspense for the story, I found my focus to be on Alice. She was a wonderfully complex character torn between her love of her adopted daughter, and her allegiance to her now dead partner Nancy. Alice knows the secrets but made a solemn vow on her soul mate's death bed not to reveal them. Alice has been the sole carer of Paige since Nancy died when Paige was ten. She is terrified that the past will be revealed – and no good will come of it. Jenn McLeod does a terrific job with Alice – a woman with her back to the wall – her allegiances called into question and the terrible strain she is under while she battles with her conscience terrified that all she holds dear will be destroyed.

There are many themes in **SEASON OF SHADOW AND LIGHT** infidelity, same sex relationships, abuse, and organ transplants. Which made it such an interesting story to read. The relationships between the different characters are very believable and the country town that was the setting just came alive on the pages. I can see I am going to have to go back and pick up some of Jenn McLeod's earlier works.

With thanks to Simon & Schuster Australia and the author via Netgalley for my copy to read and review

Veronica ?? says

Paige's life was heading in a downhill spiral. She was stuck in a rut, not fulfilled with the role of wife and mother. Her health had suffered a massive blow and her marriage was crumbling around her. After finding a photo of her long deceased mother at a horse ranch she decides that two weeks in the country with her daughter, Matilda, and Nana Alice would help her relax and sort herself out. And who knows she may come across someone that knew her mother.

But when a hot, stressful trip finds them lost and stranded in the tiny outback town of Coolabah Tree Gully,

with Nana Alice becoming more stressed by the minute, Paige begins to wonder if this trip was such a good idea. Paige soon befriends Sharni and Aiden who have both come home to the small country town to get their lives back on track. She soon finds that even though the residents of Coolabah Tree Gully are a bit rough around the edges they are all genuine people with hearts of gold and she is soon feeling right at home.

Season of Shadow and Light is a story about fate, family, love, secrets, acceptance and forgiveness. As Alice would say "two wrongs don't make a right" but it's never too late to right a wrong.

I enjoyed this story with a real Australian flavour. I loved the descriptions and mentions of towns I have visited and how the residents of Coolabah Tree Gully were so welcoming and accepting of strangers.

With Thanks to Simon & Schuster via Netgalley for my copy to read and review.

Jenn J McLeod says

Hi all, it's me--Jenn. The author. I just wanted to let you know, even though you might see my books listed as "The Seasons Quartet", the title refers more to the books being a collection of 'SEASON-based stories'. Season of Shadow and Light is my third novel and it is definitely a STANDALONE story. You don't need to have read my previous books to enjoy this one.

Michelle says

Book No #22 for #aww2015

I have only heard good things about the Seasons Collection and Jenn's debut House of all Seasons was one of our book club reads, one I unfortunately didn't read but have got on my towering TBR to get to. After having read Season of Shadow and Light I am even more determined to go back and read the first two in the collection.

Season of Shadow and Light is a complex story filled with secrets which make for some intense mystery that kept me guessing, some of those guesses made room for some hairy situations had they come to pass. It is a story of family, of trust, of betrayal and most of all of healing. I loved it from the very first page to the very last.

We have multiple story tellers, three for the most part but then an extra joins the ranks late in the piece, for a broad perspective and a much more insightful story. This method allowed us to see deep inside the story, and understand motivations that we may not have otherwise while driving the mystery and sustaining suspense. Yes, there were some predictable outcomes but there were some that took quite a bit of working out and many is it or isn't it moments all the while ensuring that not all the questions were answered.

Paige Turner has given herself a time out from her life and packed up her 6 year old daughter Matilda for a road trip. Perhaps a little rash, not completely thought out, but something she felt she had to do and when Alice couldn't talk her out of it she decided to tag along. The plan was to head to small town Saddleton with some half baked idea to find out a little more about her history because she knows very little about her mothers roots.

The dynamics in Season of Shadow and Light are not so much new but not often explored, it is becoming

much more common now but this was a family dynamic that I was new to in literature. Paige grew up with two mothers in a time that it was far from common, and even further from socially acceptable so the fact that her history goes back no further than her birth is not that hard to understand. Nancy was Paige's birth mother, who passed away when she was a child, and Alice was her partner. After Nancy's death Alice took on the role as Paige's mother and that made life a little simpler.

The timeline jumps around a little which I did have trouble following at times because the characters seemed to wander off into their memories without notice, totally sidetracking a scene and there were times I wasn't quite sure if we ended up getting to the end of the scene in the present because we got so caught up in the past. Except for the fact that it confused me at times this helped to drive the story because so much was rooted in the history of these characters.

The rest of my review will be available to read at [Beauty and Lace](#)

Lily Malone says

What a lovely, thought-provoking story this was. Starting slow, then building to a complex web of family intrigue, friendships and relationships and how they bend and bulge and almost-break under times of extreme stress.

Paige lies to protect the people she loves. Her entire life is built around protecting people she loves. Does this mitigate the lie? For me, in this book, it did.

Congratulations on another small-town story masterpiece, Jenn J. I'm so glad I got to read this book before the new one, *Other Side Of The Season*.

AusRomToday says

As the title suggests, *Season of Shadow and Light* is an intensely powerful read, exploring the topics of love and trust whilst simultaneously exposing the effects and depths of deception and betrayal within families and communities. Not one to mince her words, McLeod tells this story in a no-holds-barred manner that leaves the reader with absolutely no doubt as to the importance of the story, its characters, and the lessons we can all learn from having read it. 5 stars and marking this one as a Must Read! – J'aimee Brooker (AusRom Today and *The Romance of Cooking*).

Sharon says

Paige feels like her life is collapsing down round her. Two years ago Paige and her husband, Robert lost a baby that they had yearned for. Since then things for Paige and Robert hadn't been working well in fact they were growing apart.

Paige decided it was time to go away, so she told Robert that she was going away for a few weeks with her daughter Mati and Nana Alice. She told Robert they would be heading to a town called Saddleton. Only they never planned on getting lost on the way. With terrible flood waters, many of the roads were closed. Finally they ended up in the town of Coolabah Tree Gully. With nowhere else to go they had no option but to get accommodation at the local pub.

As the days passed Paige and Mati began to enjoy Coolabah Tree Gully unlike Nana Alice, who was starting to feel very uncomfortable and just wanted to move on as quickly as possible. Paige could see the change in Nana Alice but was confused as to what had gotten into her. What Paige didn't know was that Nana Alice was keeping secrets which she had been carrying round with her for life and being in Coolabah Tree Gully she knew that her secrets may no longer stay secret especially now that Paige and Mati were getting quite friendly with people in town. Would Nana Alice's secrets stay hidden or were they about to be discovered?

Once again Aussie author Jenn J McLeod has written another very entertaining read. A compelling tale of love, trust, betrayal, and family secrets. I really enjoyed Season of Shadow and Light and I have no hesitation in highly recommending it to anyone who loves a great read.

Marianne says

Season of Shadow and Light is the third book in the Seasons Collection by Australian author, Jenn J McLeod. Paige Turner is determined to go on a road trip: she needs a break from her cheating husband, needs to sort out her life, and heading to Saddleton on the strength of a tiny clue about her deceased mum seems a good idea. She will take along six-year-old Matilda, and sixty-year-old Nana Alice has reluctantly decided to go along too. But weather conspires against them, and they are detoured to, and stranded in the town of Coolabah Tree Gully.

After a night at the Billabong Hotel, they become the guests of Sharni and young son Liam at Nevaeh, a hillside property. Mati is happy to explore with Liam, and the country pace and fresh air suit Paige (and dishy pub chef Aiden is an added attraction), but Alice is cranky and eager to return home. She realises that Coolabah Tree Gully may well be the place from which Nancy, Paige's mother (and Alice's one true love), escaped years earlier. Could the secret Alice has promised to keep for thirty years be revealed? Yet, when her lies are threatened with exposure, it is curiosity that keeps her from fleeing.

Most of the story is told from three different points of view: Paige, Alice and Aiden each relate present day events as well as recalling the past. None of them knows all the facts, so McLeod adds a sense of mystery, planting clues for readers, throwing in the odd red herring and finally revealing the who and the what and the why. McLeod captures country NSW with consummate ease: her descriptions are evocative and her characters, familiar to anyone who has travelled over the divide. The plot has a few twists, there is humour and heartache, and the ending is realistic: "There were lessons learned about secrets and lies, trust and betrayal, family, friendship and forgiveness". A very enjoyable read.

Brenda says

Paige and Robert's marriage was a little rocky – two years prior Paige had lost a longed for baby son and suffered a postpartum stroke which still affected her. Nana Alice and six year old daughter Matilda kept her sane but Paige couldn't say the same about Robert – their lives had drifted apart and Paige was unhappy. When the opportunity arose, she informed Robert that she, along with Nana Alice and Mati would have a two week holiday in a quaint little boatshed in a bush town called Saddleton – leaving Robert to his privileged and boring life in Sydney.

But along the way the long, hot and dreary drive had turned into a challenge – they became lost due to floodwaters closing various roads and ended up in an even smaller bush community called Coolabah Tree Gully – and that was where Paige found they were stuck. Flooded roads forced them to seek accommodation in the local pub – they couldn’t return to Sydney; they couldn’t move on to Saddleton – but was it fate they had ended up in Coolabah Tree Gully?

Nana Alice was tense and stressed. She loved her daughter Paige and granddaughter Mati deeply; but the secrets she was hiding, and had been hiding for decades were wearing her down. And now, here in this unexpected place she felt trapped. She had to get her little family away from there; away before the trust between Paige and Nana Alice turned to dust...

As Mati and Paige fell in love with the local area; the horses, the friendly neighbours, the animals and birds – and seven year old Liam bonded immediately with Mati – Alice could feel the pressure mounting. Paige could see Alice was troubled but couldn’t prize it from her – she was moody; first bubbly and happy, then angry and depressed. Paige was confused – her beloved Nana Alice was never like this. What would be the outcome? Would Alice keep her secrets?

Season of Shadow and Light is another enjoyable contemporary novel by Aussie author Jenn J McLeod. It is a story of family; of betrayal and trust; of secrets and lies. But ultimately it is a story of forgiveness and love. I have no hesitation in recommending this novel to all lovers of contemporary fiction, along with the author’s previous two “Season” novels.

With thanks to NetGalley and Simon & Schuster for my copy to read and review.

Sandy *The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice* says

This is a story of secrets and lies, trust and betrayal, family, friendship and forgiveness.

Paige has had a terrible time - she had a stillborn son, she had a stroke and now her husband has betrayed her.

So she sets off on a restorative roadtrip with her daughter Mati and Nana Alice, her dead mothers partner.

Flooding strands her in a small town in the woop-woops where the local publican may resemble Mr Magoo (according to Mati), the hotel chef has a temper, and the barmaid/waitress a heart of gold.

This is a lovely story, well-written, sad and uplifting, that had me chuckling in places and crying in others.

A definite recommendation.

Thank you to NetGalley, Simon & Schuster, & author Jenn McLeod for the copy for review
