

Release

LUCY CHRISTOPHER



Praise for *Release*

'Gripping and totally twisted—you'll break social engagements so you can stay home and finish it.'

CHRISTIAN WHITE

'Utterly compelling, clever, heart-stopping.'

JO NADIN

'An urgent, addictive and provocative exploration of trauma, love and redemption.'

LORAINE PECK

'Daring, edgy and electric.'

SAMANTHA HARVEY

'Furiously passionate prose, clean as a bone.'

C.J. SKUSE

About Lucy Christopher

Lucy Christopher is a British-Australian writer, whose first YA novel *Stolen* was a Michael L. Printz Honor Book, won a 2011 USBBY Outstanding International Book Award, and received the UK's Branford Boase Award. Lucy has written several other novels for young people, was the director of the MA in Writing for Young People at Bath Spa University, and is now a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Tasmania. *Release*, a companion to *Stolen*, is her first novel for adults. When not writing, Lucy spends her time daydreaming, walking dogs, and visiting family and friends spread across the world. She is passionate about the importance of wild environments.

About the book

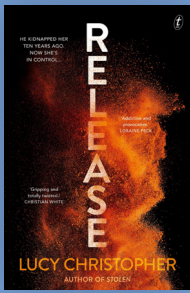
Ten years ago, sixteen-year-old Gemma Toombs was kidnapped from Bangkok Airport by an infatuated drifter, Tyler MacFarlane, who took her to a secret den in the Australian desert. Now her name is Kate Stone and it's her turn to confront Ty and try to find answers to the questions that have obsessed her since her ordeal. What is the legacy of this coercive relationship? Who holds the cards now? In the confusion of past and present, will Kate remain trapped in a deranged dance of desire and revenge? Or will she regain control and find release?

Set in both London and Perth, a courtroom drama and a road trip in the searing heat of the West Australian desert, *Release* is the story of two people confronting each other, each intent on destruction and survival. A companion to Lucy Christopher's bestselling novel *Stolen*, this gripping psychological thriller explores a young woman's discovery of the complicated truth about a relationship that once seemed alluring.

Questions for discussion

1. The book opens with a courtroom scene. What are your first impressions from this scene? Discuss the assumptions you make in this moment and the way your interpretation or understanding changes as the book progresses.
2. What is the meaning of the foxes in the narrative? Do they represent Gem, Ty, or something beyond both of them?





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3. What is your response to the claustrophobic stream-of-consciousness that dominates Gem's narrative? Do you view her as a reliable narrator? How do you think she is seen by others?
4. How does the writer use the structure of the novel to play with and disrupt your expectations of the plot?
5. When Gemma dreams of Ty, she describes him as 'everything I can't have.' (p. 18) What does this tell you about what she wants? Does she know what she wants?
6. How is Gemma defined by what has happened to her? Can you imagine a reality where she is able to be free from what happened to her? What would this look like?
7. Gemma views her crimes and Ty's quite differently, but are they different? Legally? Morally?
8. Gemma objects to being described as a victim, saying 'those words were just another way of silencing me, moulding me into the shape of a good girl, the female they expected. To everyone else, we only had one story: you, the evil kidnapper, and me, the helpless victim. I was innocent and you the opposite. But it was always more complicated, wasn't it?' (p. 20) Why is the term 'victim' problematic for Gemma? What are some of the societal expectations placed on a victim? Describe your responses to her perception of what happened—is it, as she says 'more complicated', or is her perception warped?
9. How does Gemma's romantic view of the desert fail to live up to the reality of it? Discuss the way that the writer uses the degraded landscape to heighten the tensions of the narrative.
10. Are Gemma's frustrations towards her mother fair? Are her mother's expectations of her fair? What impact has Gemma's kidnapping had on the relationships she has with her parents and other people?
11. Consider the difference between the persona Kate Stone presents online to her clients and to her parents, and Gemma's internal monologue. Which persona does she see herself as? Either? Is there a moment in the novel where you feel that she is fully herself?
12. What form does the book's titular 'release' finally take? Are you satisfied with this ending? How do you imagine Gemma's life after?
13. Did Gemma really let Ty go free? What do you make of the ending? Do you have any doubts about his freedom?
14. Does Ty deserve a second chance? Does Gemma?

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