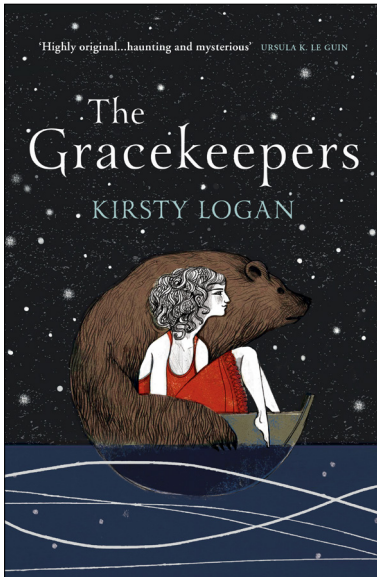


VINTAGE READING GUIDE



SYNOPSIS

The magical story of a floating circus and two young women in search of a home.

The sea has flooded the earth. North lives on a circus boat, floating between the scattered islands that remain. She dances with her beloved bear, while the rest of the crew trade dazzling and death-defying feats for food from the islanders. However, North has a secret that could capsize her life with the circus.

Callanish lives alone in her house in the middle of the ocean, with only the birds and the fish for company. As penance for a terrible mistake, she works as a gracekeeper, tending the graves of those who die at sea. What drove her from home is also what pulls her towards North.

QUESTIONS

In *The Gracekeepers*, Kirsty Logan has conjured a world rich in magic and strangeness. Land is scarce, landlockers revere the few remaining trees, paper – like the ruffles on Red Gold's shirt – is wildly expensive, and damplings must wear bells when they roam the land. What was your favorite image from this book's unique and powerful world? What were your first impressions of the novel?

Both Callanish and North have secrets, both physical and emotional, that they hide from the world. What are they, and how do they affect the choices they make as characters? Why do you think North and Callanish keep their secrets for so long?

In their world, Callanish and North are defined by their respective roles as Gracekeeper and Bear Girl. In your opinion, how much control do they have over their lives? Are there benefits to either of their lifestyles and, if so, what are they?

The restings performed by the Gracekeepers are part of a rich cultural tradition to bury and honor the dead. Describe a few of these rituals—in what ways are they similar to or different from those you've practiced in your own lives?

Despite the danger, North sleeps beside her bear and puts herself at risk caring for him. Were you surprised by the depth of North's feelings for him? Why do you think he played such an emotionally central role in her life?

The Excalibur is not only a traveling circus but, also, a family with complex relationships and a ship's crew. What roles do each of the performers play in their small community? Which relationships most intrigued you?

The glammers and the clowns play a special function within the circus: both are provocative acts that entice, and incite, the audience. What tools do they use to tap into people's emotions?

Land and sea, male and female, dampling and landlocker – duality is ever-present in the novel. What do you think the author is exploring here?

Like most dampings, Melia and Whitby revere the ocean. Red Gold and Avalon revere the land, as do most landlockers. Which appealed to you the most and why?

North is reluctant to share the story of her pregnancy because, even for the world of landlockers and dampings, it's rather fantastic. What did you take away from her telling of it? Did you believe her?

When Callanish and North first meet, they confide in each other very quickly. What do you think prompts this sudden intimacy?

Both Callanish and North's lives are defined by loss. Is this true for the other inhabitants of their world?

How does Kirsty Logan define the concept of "family" throughout *The Gracekeepers*? What does it mean to North and Callanish?

Callanish has never forgiven herself for what happened to her mother. How does she attempt to atone, and do you think she succeeds?

The theme of searching runs throughout the novel. Do you think North, Callanish, and the other characters, find what they're looking for? Aside from Callanish and North, which characters did you most wish happiness for throughout the novel?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kirsty Logan is a writer, performer, literary editor, writing mentor and book reviewer. Her short story collection, *The Rental Heart & Other Fairytales*, won the Scott Prize and was longlisted for the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award. She regularly performs her stories at events and festivals throughout the world. She lives in Glasgow with her fiancée and their rescue puppy. *The Gracekeepers* is her first novel.

CRITICAL RECEPTION AND REVIEWS

'Highly original... haunting and mysterious' Ursula K. Le Guin

'In luscious, vivid prose, Logan brings to mind Angela Carter, or Atwood or Winterson at their best'
Independent

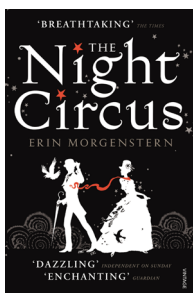
'A gorgeously melancholy novel, a post-apocalyptic fairy tale of mermen and mourning birds, ghost cities on the ocean floor, and precious soil. I envy the reader who is just now picking it up.'
Herald

'Beautiful and bewitching: read it and be swept away on a magical wave of love and language'
Bookseller

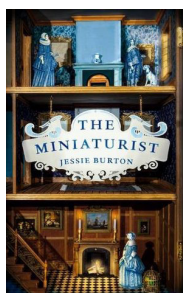
ALSO BY KIRSTY LOGAN:

- *The Rental Heart & Other Fairytales*

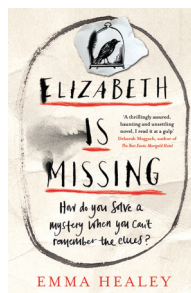
SUGGESTED FURTHER READING



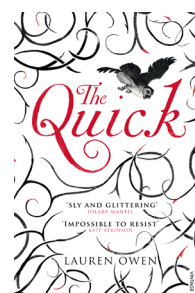
The Night Circus
ERIN
MORGENSTERN



The Miniaturist
JESSIE BURTON



Elizabeth is Missing
EMMA HEALEY



The Quick
LAUREN OWEN



Burial Rites
HANNAH KENT