

PRIVATE PROSECUTION

LISA ELLERY

ABOUT THE BOOK

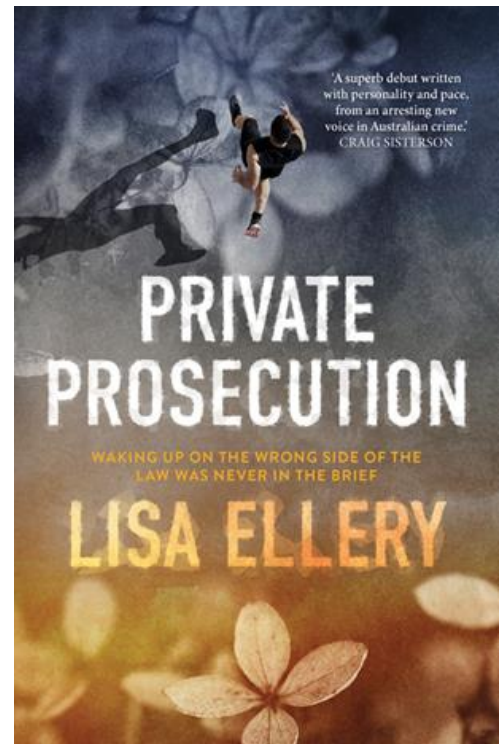
Andrew Deacon is young, fit and single, a junior prosecutor at the West Australian DPP with a bright future. He thinks he knows a bit about the world, but nothing can prepare him for the morning after hooking up with a gorgeous florist, when he finds himself the prime suspect in her murder. The trouble is, Andrew believes he knows who killed Lily Constantine, but there is not a shred of evidence to prove that her murderer is respected barrister Sam Godfrey SC. A whole lot of bad business is about to go down in lawyer town and – like the filling in the proverbial sandwich – Andrew will find himself right in the middle of it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Ellery was raised on a sheep, cattle and barley farm at Gibson near Esperance on Western Australia's south coast. She studied law and arts at the University of Western Australia before returning to regional WA in 1998 to commence her career as a lawyer in the gold mining city of Kalgoorlie–Boulder. She soon fell in love with Kal and its people, and in 2008 established her own law firm there. She works predominantly in commercial and mining law and employs a dozen staff in her busy Hannan Street practice. Lisa is married to Simon Ellery, a geologist. She divides her time between managing her law firm, running in the Goldfields bush and writing.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the novel's title mean?
2. How would you describe the character of Andrew Deacon? Are we supposed to like him?
3. Would you say that Andrew's tendencies are kept in check by some of the people around him, like his friend Russ and his brother Rodney?
4. What is the role of the Department of Public Prosecutions for whom Andrew Deacon works as a junior barrister?
5. Is it surprising that someone like Andrew would wind up working there?
6. Why does Andrew care so much about Lily Constantine?
7. What different kinds of justice are at play in this legal thriller? What do you think the author is saying about them?
8. In a crime novel, do you think it matters *how* social order is restored, just as long as it is?
9. How does Lisa Ellery employ humour in this crime novel, and what effect does it have on the delivery of some of the book's darker themes?
10. What does this novel have to say about violence committed between men and by men?
11. Andrew is pretty sure he knows who killed Lily Constantine. How does his certainty contribute to a reader's expectations regarding a whodunnit?
12. How does Andrew learn and grow as the novel progresses (even if he has to do it the hard way)?
13. In your opinion, is it possible to tell that the character of Andrew Deacon was written by a woman rather than a man?



INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

Where did the character of Andrew Deacon come from?

I'm not sure, actually. Andrew is a bit of a mystery. I've always enjoyed writing from a male point of view as much as a female one (a reader once told me I understood exactly how men thought, and he wasn't sure whether to feel jealous of my husband or sorry for him). But there's no one in my life I can point to and say that is where I got the idea of Andrew from. I think perhaps Andrew has come out of me in a slightly more complex way. He is hardworking and committed to establishing his career, but neither detract from his love of life and his ability to live in the moment. He is capable of being the life of the party, but he is also capable of unflinching loyalty, at great personal cost. All of that he has in common with my dad, who died in 2014. So perhaps Andrew is who I want to be, an aspirational character.

Did you always want to set a crime novel in a law firm, given that you also work in one?

It wasn't until very recently that it occurred to me to try writing crime. Until I started writing *Private Prosecution*, I'd never actually considered that being a lawyer (even if I haven't worked in criminal law for quite a few years) might mean I was better placed than the average amateur writer to write crime. I never put these two aspects of my life together in my mind. They (lawyer–writer) were almost like two separate identities. To be honest the thought of writing crime didn't excite me, at least not until I tried it. I only started *Private Prosecution* as a bit of an experiment, once the penny did drop (and after reading a couple of excellent crime novels set in Western Australia, at the insistence of a friend), I was surprised to find that the book started to almost write itself. Characters sprung to life and I discovered I was enjoying the process of tying a complicated plot together and writing about things I had to research. I love being a lawyer because every day there are new and interesting problems to solve, and being a crime writer is every bit as intellectually challenging.

What elements of the real world found their way into this novel?

So many. Everything I write about comes from somewhere. I have discovered there's nothing lamer than a joke you've made up. Yet the funniest things happen of their own accord every single day. I use them, or bits of them, or the idea of them. So much that's funny in *Private Prosecution* has actually happened in one form or another. A lot of the stories about criminal activity are from my time working in crime (hopefully changed sufficiently so that I won't get in trouble), or from stories that were in the news, which are often bleakly hilarious. And characters of course are drawn from people and things I know. Andrew comes from where I come from, and his mum and dad have a lot in common with mine. The character of Russ is very heavily drawn from a good friend of mine. I am a runner and a water-skier. Of course, Andrew is way better than me at both these things. After all, I'm the one telling the story.

What's next for Lisa Ellery?

I have a plan to set my next novel in the Goldfields, where I live. I've already got some super characters in mind and most of the plot worked out. I just need to get it down on paper, which is a bit of a balancing act with my busy lifestyle.



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