



## Simmering Season

*Jenn J. McLeod*

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*When a school reunion brings home more than just memories...*

Back in Calingarry Crossing to sell the family pub, Maggie Lindeman has no idea a perfect storm is heading her way until her past and present collide with the unexpected.

Maggie once had a crush on Dan Ireland, now a work-weary police crash investigator, still hell-bent on punishing himself for his misspent youth. Dan has ample reason for not going home to Calingarry Crossing for the school reunion, but one very good reason why he should.

Maggie is dealing with a restless seventeen-year-old son, a father with dementia, a fame-obsessed musician husband, a dwindling bank account and a country pub that just won't sell.

The last thing she needs is a surprise houseguest for the summer. Fiona Bailey-Blair, daughter of an old friend and spoilt with everything but the truth, whips up a maelstrom of gossip when she blows into town.

This storm season, when a school reunion brings home more than memories, Maggie Lindeman will discover ... there's no keeping a lid on some secrets.

## Simmering Season Details

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## From Reader Review Simmering Season for online ebook

### Greg Barron says

Having read and enjoyed Jenn's first book, House for All Seasons, I was looking forward to getting into Simmering Season. Maggie is an endearing main character, and I empathised with her situation - a teenage boy and a creative but selfish husband trying to make it big back in Sydney - not to mention an exciting old beau. The author has created a living, breathing small town, peopled with wonderful characters, an amazing achievement.

It was fitting that I read the book during the storm season, as the pace picked up towards the "perfect storm" climax. There were many touching and poignant moments in Simmering Season, and it's well worth a read.

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### Kylie Kaden says

Jenn J McLeod has done it again, creating a wonderful display of authentic characters, realistic relationships and Australian culture. What I admired most is the realism in the prose, the flaws in the protagonists and true portrayal of relationships. It was refreshing to read a story with a mature protagonist in lieu of the feisty young beauties often at the centre of many novels. I felt like I'd actually visited Calingarry Crossing, enjoyed a drink at the bar, and been injected with a strong dose of country life, all from my living room. A highly enjoyable read with a strong Australian feel. Looking forward to her next country romp!

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### MarciaB - Book Muster Down Under says

In *Simmering Season* , Jenn J. McLeod returns us to the rustic little town of Calingarry Crossing to which we were introduced in House for All Seasons (House), but this time it's Maggie Lindemann's story, and there are secrets aplenty simmering just below the surface.

Daughter of the small town's ex-Reverend turned Publican, Maggie returned two years ago with her son Noah, to settle her dad and attempt to sell his pub due to his swiftly declining health.

Initially a temporary separation from her star-struck husband Brian and a hope that this would be just the opportunity to lift her and Brian out of the financial and emotional detritus that had become their life, Maggie didn't count on the fact that she was going to fall in love for the very first time – with the town and the people. Unfortunately (or would it be fortunately?), pubs are not that easy to sell in small towns and Maggie has found herself staying far longer than she thought although she's slowly beginning to see it as an opportunity to rebuild a life for her and her little family - if only Brian would stop pursuing that elusive dream.

When she attends the funeral of a friend and meets the young Fiona Bailey-Blair, she finds herself inviting Fiona to stay at the pub for a while. This decision appears to be one of the worst she has made, with the first rumblings of discord arriving with Fiona and her announcement that she's come to Calingarry intent on finding her real father.

As the layers of the narrative continue to unfold, unexpected forces begin to manifest themselves as, firstly, seventeen year old Noah hits it off straight away with Fiona. With Maggie's introspection, those forces intensify, threatening to become a full-blown squall when Dan Ireland, the bad-boy ex-friend of her brother whose presence was plucked away from Maggie's life by a terrible family tragedy, makes his appearance, culminating in a tempest of epic proportions, when Maggie finds her loyalty to Brian being challenged as she comes face-to-face with all the half-truths, lies and deception that she has avoided for the last twenty years.

There's a certain enchantment to Calingarry Crossing that I just can't help but be drawn to and I love the way the little town almost becomes a character in its own right. It's a place where there's a lot happening to the people who live there and, as with House, its main focus is on relationships - the good, the bad and the ugly.

From Maggie, our admirable albeit frustrating protagonist, who I could have quite easily shaken from time to time; the shallow Fiona, shaped by circumstance and now searching for the truth; Brian, an extremely weak and selfish individual whom I disliked intensely as I saw him constantly dodge his familial responsibilities; Ethne, the steadfast presence in Maggie's life; to Dan, living in a complicated marriage and almost burnt out from a job which continually brings painful memories to the fore, Jenn J McLeod once again adds much depth by creating a rich mosaic of fully realised characters whose lives interest the reader as she explores some of the human needs and flaws that plague us from time-to-time. In no way glossing over those moments in our lives that "suck", Jenn instead throws them out there for her characters to deal with, while peppering the pages with her fabulous wit and adding just the right amount of seasoning to give a lovely light-hearted feel to the story.

Dementia, loss, fidelity, and recreational drug abuse are just some of the underlying themes that Jenn J McLeod compassionately touches on as she deftly structures the novel from Maggie's perspective, with chapters throughout dedicated to Dan and Fiona's POV's. This reviewer feels that she is fast making her mark on being an intelligent and skilful writer who is able to effortlessly combine a large cast with a complex storyline that leads the reader in one direction, thereafter progressing the plot with developments that we could never have anticipated.

The fact that this novel has the same strength and depth of quality as House shows that she is going to be a steady and consistent talent in Australian fiction and this is a heart-warming novel which, for me, was also about crossing that bridge to the place where the heart has always been.

While Simmering Season can be read as a standalone novel, I would recommend reading House first as it will give the reader some deeper insight into some of the characters.

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### **Alison Swann says**

Another amazing book by Jenn J McLeod. If you thought you loved House for All Seasons, then this one is even better. Its a REALLY GOOD read, has you page turning quickly; absorbing the characters, laughing, crying and experiencing all those emotions that you should when you read a good book. Cant wait for this author's next book, and the next .... highly recommended.

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### **Margi says**

This was a good, heart warming story filled with lots of secrets and a good cast of characters. I enjoyed A House For All Seasons more but glad I read this.

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### **Brenda says**

Maggie Lindeman had returned to Calingarry Crossing with her teenage son Noah the minute she heard her beloved father had become too ill to continue running the family pub; the Rev, as everyone affectionately called him, had finally succumbed to dementia – a fact which saddened Maggie immensely – so Maggie needed to sell the pub, make sure her Dad was settled, and then return to their lives in Sydney. Brian, her husband and Noah’s dad, had refused to come with them, stating the music industry and his “big break” was much more important – he couldn’t afford the time away from his burgeoning career.

But life had a way of straying from the path everyone had chosen; the funeral of a beloved friend from their old school days had Sara and Maggie forming a close friendship. It had been more than twenty years since they had all known each other at Calingarry School; now Sara was married to Will and living in Calingarry Crossing, happier than she had ever been, and Maggie had returned; but even though her plans weren’t permanent the old place was beginning to feel like home again. As time moved on, she found it harder to contemplate a return to her Sydney life...

With preparations for the upcoming school reunion in full swing, and Maggie finding herself (as publican) busier than ever, her mind wouldn’t stop straying to a certain Dan Ireland – she had had a crush on bad boy Dan many, many years ago, and part of her was hoping he would turn up at the reunion, and another part was hoping he wouldn’t. But when a spoilt and petulant young woman by the name of Fiona Bailey-Blair arrived, the fragile lives of many began to fracture. Suddenly the secrets and lies from years past were being exposed – with the simmering heat, the threatening storms and the school reunion all set to collide, would there be any survivors in life’s perfect storm?

Aussie author Jenn J McLeod has done it again! But this one, her second novel, is even better than her first, in my opinion – and I loved her first book, *House for all Seasons*. The plot was intriguing, with a couple of unexpected twists; the story was emotional and had me in tears a number of times - all in all a fabulous read, and one I have no hesitation in recommending highly.

With thanks to the publisher for my copy to read and review.

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### **Veronica ?? says**

I have found myself reading the season books in reverse order but it has not dampened my enjoyment of the stories as each book stands on its own very well.

Maggie is back in Calingarry Crossing to sell the family pub but 2 years on and the pub still not sold she is now thinking of staying permanently. If only she could convince her husband, Brian, to leave Sydney and join her and their son Noah.

Charlie Ireland, a Vietnam vet, takes the post stress trauma out on his youngest son, Dan, who in turn leads a rebellious teenage life leaving death and destruction in his path. Will he be welcome all these years later at the high school reunion?

Simmering Season is an in-depth look at a small country town and how a tragic event can affect the whole town in different ways.

Plus a school reunion that blows the lid on a lifetime of secrets!

McLeod covers many issues that are not only relevant to a country setting such as parent and teen relationships, an adult child's relationship with their aging parent, the far reaching effects of fatal car accidents, malicious gossip, bullying and second chances.

I love the character development in the story. The characters are so well fleshed out that you fall in love with all of them. Even the minor characters play an important role in this story full of country feels and community spirit.

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### **Lily Malone says**

I'm writing this review from a very cold and wet winter in the far south west corner of Western Australia. It's a place called Margaret River and it's famous for wine and surf. It's also a helluva long way from Jenn J McLeod's fictional town of Calingarry Crossing some 8 hours drive west of Sydney in New South Wales (ie, the opposite side of Australia).

There is also not a heck of a lot of 'simmering' going on in Margaret River now (unless it's hot soup) given the cold, wet state of affairs here. So: I chose to read Simmering Season because I needed a good red wine and a good warming up, and this book has been a comfort to me over several nights in front of a roaring fire. I read Jenn J's debut novel, House For All Seasons last year, having bought it for my mother for Mother's Day. (My mum loved House). This year I bought Jenn's follow up book, Simmering Season, which my mother didn't quite enjoy as much as House, but which I personally, enjoyed more. Don't you love that subjectivity that comes with reading good books?

I've been trying to put my finger on what I most loved about Simmering Season, compared with House For All Seasons, and I've come up with this: House is written in four distinct point of views, sharing the stories of four women who each spend a season in Calingarry Crossing at Dandelion House, after it's bequeathed to them to do so, when the owner of Dandelion House (Gypsy) dies.

The character in House that I most enjoyed was Amber, and in Simmering Season, while Amber is not 'on the page' so much, it is her legacy that takes up a great part of events. I've very much enjoyed staying with one story-line in Simmering Season, that of Maggie and Dan, Maggie's son Noah, and 'Cyclone Fiona' (Amber's daughter), all of whom are embroiled in the type of deep, dark, small town secret that is mainstay fodder for Jenn J McLeod's books.

In the end, I think it is this connectivity to the events of a single 'boiling point' season, and Maggie's central conflicts and story that see her engulfed in a perfect storm, that has held me engrossed for the last few nights. Jenn J McLeod has a lovely colloquial writing style that sits well with a 'come home to the country' theme. I read her books and I feel like I'm listening to an old bloke sitting in the corner of a local pub with a beer, spinning a yarn or two about his life to the barmaid, before ambling off to make it home for a hot meal before the night sets in.

Thank you for another 5 star read, Jenn.

There is a sneak preview of the third book in the 'Season's Collection' at the end of Simmering Season and it sounds just as absorbing as the first two books.

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### **Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says**

Those who have read Jenn J McLeod's debut, House for all Seasons, will be delighted to reunite with some of the characters met in the small Australian country town of Calingarry's Crossing. It is however a minor character, Maggie Lindeman, that takes the lead in Jenn McLeod's loosely linked sequel, Simmering Season.

When Maggie's father fell ill, she and her teenage son, Noah, reluctantly left husband, and father, Brian, in Sydney with plans to sell the family pub in Calingarry Crossing and reunite in a few months. But two years on, with no-one showing interest in the motel, Maggie is warming to the idea of making the move permanent, if only Brian, obsessed with chasing fame, would agree to join them. Frustrated by Brian's excuses to remain separated from his family, Maggie's loyalty to her errant husband is tested when her teenage crush, Dan Ireland, returns to Calingarry Crossing for the school reunion. But Dan's return isn't the only thing troubling Maggie, her son is growing restless, Amber's headstrong daughter, Fiona, is her guest for the summer, and as the season wears on, simmering secrets begin bubbling to the surface.

While I thought things were a little slow to heat up in the Simmering Season as the author establishes the back story for the three main characters, Maggie, Fiona and Dan, once the school reunion gets underway, the story begins to move forward with surprising revelations and some dramatic moments, prompting the characters to make decisions about their future.

As in the House For All Seasons, the major themes of this novel examines the need to make peace with the past in order to move forward and the importance of knowing what you need, and want, to be happy within yourself.

In trying to accommodate what Maggie thinks her husband and son wants from her, instead of what she needs, Maggie has grown increasingly resentful, but is unwilling to admit it. At times I was frustrated by Maggie, while her sense of loyalty to her husband is admirable, it is so clearly misplaced that her angst was a little wearying and in protecting her son from Brian's failures, she made herself a martyr. It took her a while but I was relieved when Maggie began to recognise her worth as the events that unfolded during Simmering Season forced her to reassess her priorities.

Dan has been punishing himself for years for the part he played in a fatal accident. Returning to Calingarry Crossing is difficult for him but he has to decide to let go of the things he can't change, and do something about those he can including dealing with his high stress job as a police car accident investigator, reuniting with his father and pursuing Maggie.

I most admired Fiona's growth during the story, a spoilt, spiteful princess with a (not entirely unwarranted) chip on her shoulder to begin with, she learns some hard lessons about the value of family and responsibility. Fiona is affected the most by the secrets her mother, Amber, kept and when they are revealed, she is finally able to make peace with her past and move on.

An appealing novel about self discovery and second chances, I enjoyed Simmering Season and I look forward to revisiting Calingarry Crossing again next year in the Season of Shadow and Light.

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## **Sharon says**

Book gifted by The Reading Room for review

Maggie Lindeman is a woman that will do anything for everyone, that is, except herself. Her life changes when she returns to Calingarry Crossing, the country town she grew up in, to be close to her father, who suffers from dementia and to sell the family pub that he ran for years. With no real interest shown in the pub she wonders what she should do, she is torn between her father who needs her in Calingarry Crossing and her husband who wants her in Sydney. But life is about to get even more complicated. Fiona Bailey-Blair, daughter of an old friend has arrived in town, she is hell bent on finding her real father and in the process turns Maggie and her son Noah's lives upside down. Secrets that were kept hidden for years will surface, which will change the lives of all of them. Maggie is just as hell bent on keeping these secrets hidden, but circumstances beyond even Maggie's control will bring them to light.

Simmering Season is the second book by Jenn J McLeod, who once again writes so beautifully with characters that will warm your heart, make you laugh, make you cry, but most of all will make you feel like you are amongst friends. As with her first book, Jenn truly captures life in rural Australia. The true essence of a small country town is portrayed expertly, from the faithful customers that visit Maggie's pub on a daily basis, to the way the community band together in times of need. There is a connection to the first book which makes for an even more enjoyable reading experience.

Highly recommended reading.

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## **Faye Barron says**

Simmering Season stands as a 'good read' on its own - but it is quite a welcoming homecoming for those of us who have already visited, and become attached to, Calingarry Crossing in House of all Seasons. Maggie Lindeman, in her late thirties, returning to the small town to take over the management of her father's small country pub, is the protagonist in this novel. As a caring mother, daughter, wife and friend, Maggie faces many of life's challenges - always putting the wants and needs of others before herself. However, life has a way of turning the tables - and this is just what happens with the interaction of other characters (particularly Dan, Fiona, Brian and Noah), when events of the past influence the present, and the future. I read this book over a two day period - and found it a thoroughly relaxing and engrossing read. Thank you Jenn McLeod!

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## **Sharon says**

Maggie Lindeman returned to her hometown of Calingarry Crossing with her teenage son, Noah. Maggie's

father has dementia and can no longer run the family pub. Maggie will take over until they can find a buyer and then she will return to her home in Sydney. Seeing her father's health decline is quite upsetting for Maggie at times. Maggie would've liked her husband, Brian to come with her, but he said he couldn't afford the time away from his music career.

Maggie has been kept busy since she arrived back and trying to find a buyer for the pub was turning out to be more difficult than she thought. Keeping tabs on her son, Noah making sure he didn't up to anything thing he shouldn't and also popping in regularly to see how her ailing father was going. He had his good days and bad days and as the days passed it seemed the bad were out weighing the good. Then there was the school reunion coming up which, Maggie was helping out with. Maggie was looking forward to catching up with old friends, but the one person she wasn't sure about seeing was, Dan Ireland. Maggie had a thing for him back when they were younger so she wasn't sure what kind of reception she would get although she didn't know if he was going to attend. Part of her wanted to see him again and part of her didn't. Will the reunion turn out to be an enjoyable day or could it be a day that most of them would rather forget?

Another fantastic read by Jenn J McLeod. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and I'm surprised at just how quickly I read it seeing as its quite a big book. Once I started I just couldn't put it down and before I knew it I was on the last page. I really enjoyed Jenn's first book, House for all Seasons, but I LOVED this one and I can't wait to read Season of Shadow and Light. Hurry up 2015. I have no hesitation in HIGHLY recommending this book.

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### **Dale Harcombe says**

Maggie Lindeman is back in Calingarry Crossing where she grew up. The aim is to sell the family pub. But that proves harder than it sounds. Meanwhile her husband Brian is elsewhere still dreaming and trying to organise his music career. Noah, their teenage son, is kept in the dark about a lot that is going on with his parents and the state of their marriage. One of the strengths of this novel is the relationships; that of Maggie with Noah, of Maggie with her father who has dementia and with Ethne who works in the pub.

There are a lot of lingering memories from Maggie's school days, her crush on Dan, her brother Michael's friend, and the girls she knew at school, including Amber. It is Amber's funeral that opens the novel and where the reader meets Amber's daughter Fiona, who is suitably brattish and unlikable when we first meet her. When Fiona arrives in Calingarry Crossing for the school reunion Amber had planned, Maggie just knows she is going to cause trouble.

The story captured me from the beginning. Even though I didn't understand Maggie's reactions at times, I liked her as a character. I loved Ethne and her homespun way of looking at things especially her view about oysters and bad barnacles. I'm not going to explain that. You need to read it in context. Maggie's friend Sara and her husband Will are great characters, and Dan is likeable as the bad boy turned policeman, still carrying guilt for events of the past. The country setting and attitudes of its inhabitants are well portrayed. I loved the little titbits like the magpie nickname and the smuddle.

I read this book very quickly and enjoyed it, though I did think some aspects towards the end were a little convenient and I could have done without use of the f word. But all in all a really enjoyable read, that covers some topics relevant to today's society. I'm looking forward to the next one by this author.

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## **Karen says**

Oh my goodness! Jenn J. McLeod has done it again!

Simmering Season is a magnificent roller coaster of emotions, with characters who pull on your heart strings, frustrate you immensely and leave you crying for more.

Lead character Maggie Lindeman could be any one of us, struggling with life's many ups and downs. Jenn writes with such honesty, I found myself relating to many of Maggie's situations.

Heart wrenching, funny, frustrating and powerful, Simmering Season is a stunning follow up to A House For all Seasons.

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## **Kathryn says**

I liked this more than the first book, A House For All Seasons, although it was also an enjoyable read. I liked the way some difficult topics were tackled, and I especially liked the author's acknowledgement at the end that these issues are reality for some people, with some phone numbers and websites for places to get help, if people have been affected.

I'm giving this 3.5 stars and looking forward to Season of Shadow and Light.

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