



Helping you choose  
your next book



## LoveReading Reader reviews of **A Dangerous Crossing** by Rachel Rhys

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



### **Helen Clark**

*On her way to Australia on board an ocean liner, Lily Shepherd is embroiled in a murder, scandal, Semitism, jealousy and falls head over heels in love on what is anything but a sedentary voyage. It's a crime novel with psychological twists, peppered with heartbreaking emotional scenes and an insight into the upper class world of the rich and famous and how they mix with the "tourist" class to escape the dullness of their stuffy world.*

*Set in the late 1930s, just before war is announced, the characters in this novel are multi-faceted and diverse, with one shared characteristic – they are all escaping from something, whether personal troubles or the*

*forthcoming war. The Italians, Jews, Australians and British passengers interact warily, conscious of the different social classes and how their individual countries will be involved in the war. As the voyage progresses the air of escapism affects them all in different ways and Rachel Rhys brings to life the fragility and uncertainty of life prior to an imminent war, in a totally believable and affecting way. The words jump out of the page and the reader is transported to a life on board the Orontes, with its mixture of hedonistic life, intrigue and excitement interlaced with utter despair.*

***A totally immersive book with great characters, clever plots with psychological twists which makes it a "must-read". A great story loosely based on facts and I want to read more books by the author.***

## **Edel Waugh**

*The story is set in 1939 just before the beginning of the war. The main character is Lily Shepherd who is about to set sail for Australia for new work opportunities. The journey is going to be a long one but there are plenty of fascinating new people onboard to talk to and get to know as well as beautiful places to stop at on the way. **If you love a mystery with a truly terrific retro feel to it then this is the perfect book for you.** There is passengers with mysterious pasts, glamour with a darker side and more than one handsome man with a twinkle in his eye. Lily is a terrific character, outgoing and optimistic, but with a healthy amount of street smarts which is essential on a hot boat where no one can get away from each other when tempers are at their highest and sensibilities seem to have been forgotten.*

***I loved this! Great setting, interesting characters and a satisfying plot!***

## **Jo-anne Atkinson**

*An ocean-going liner is a microcosm for all of society and in 1939 society is laid bare on a voyage to Australia. A group of passengers looking to escape the past collide with scandal and prejudice.*

*Spring 1939 and as Europe teeters on the edge of a precipice, Lily boards a ship at Tilbury Docks with a sense of adventure. Taking advantage of an assisted passage for domestic servants Lily is leaving her life in England behind and travelling to Australia for at least two years. Quickly seduced into life on board Lily is taken up by Edward and Helena - a pair of middle class siblings - and Max and Eliza - a society couple dogged with scandal. She also comes into contact with Fascists, Jews and Italians who co-exist uneasily on the long voyage. However by the end of the trip two people are dead and Lily is forced to re-evaluate her life.*

*Paying homage to Agatha Christie in the idea of a 'whodunnit' set in the 1930s, this book also explores a number of issues around politics and race. The treatment of the jewish refugees by those on board, and particularly those in authority, is simple and dismissive, the inhabitants of Egypt and Aden are a lower form of humanity. Whilst the Second World War is not writ large, the tension it brings to proceedings is subtle and clever. The final twist is barely hinted at but makes complete sense and more to the story. **Appearing as a simple story about a crime on a voyage, this is actually a complex and extremely satisfying novel with multiple layers that make it***

**worth exploring.**

pluckedhighbrow.wordpress.com

**Sue Packer**

***A real page turner that will keep you guessing right until the end!***

*'A Dangerous Crossing' starts with a woman being led off a ship in handcuffs. The journey from England to Australia in the summer of 1939 was to be the start of a new life for some, an escape from dark secrets at home for others and death for at least one person on board. We are then taken back to the start of the voyage and meet the passengers whose lives become intertwined when friendships are formed and enemies are made.*

*The blurring of class divides throws people together who would not usually mix and the combination is exciting but potentially disastrous and the story follows young Lily Shepherd, who plans to find work in service in Australia. Could it be her who ultimately ends up in handcuffs? Or perhaps the wild and unpredictable Eliza, or bitter and lonely Ida? The juxtaposition of characters from different walks of life, and some carrying guilty secrets from home makes for a real page turner of a book and the revelation of the killer's identity at the end kept me guessing throughout, as does who meets their demise and why! A great read and thoroughly recommended.*

**Susan Andrews**

***A wonderful evocative book of another time.***

*The book opens with a woman being escorted off a ship in handcuffs by police. There is a hint that a murder has occurred.*

*The time is July 1939. The main character in the book is Lily, who has left home to go into service and enjoy a two year adventure in Australia. The story all takes place on the ship.*

*Lilly meets up with Max and Eliza, Edward and Helena, and a Jewish girl Maria. All these people have secrets and none are exposed until nearly the end of the book.*

*I didn't find any of them except Lilly particularly nice people, in fact I disliked some of them intensely.*

*This didn't stop the book being a wonderful, authentic historical fiction. The*

detail was brilliantly written, I felt I was on the ship with all the heat and the claustrophobic atmosphere. It also showed up the social divide of the time. Max and Eliza comes down from 1st class as they are being shunned by the others as they know of the scandal they are running away from. They are the cause of most of the trouble that will happen.

This is a wonderful book that I really recommend.

Just as an aside. The cover of the hardback is very evocative of the posters of the time. If you take the cover off the book itself is lovely!

### **Siobhan McDowell**

I was interested to read this as I prefer to read vintage crime/detective novels from the 30's, 40's and fifties. **I was not disappointed in the setting as it was set on board an ocean liner taking a wide range of people to new lives in Australia.** The descriptions of the tourist class and first class areas on board were nicely described as were the fashions of the time. The narrator I found was a bit too grim for my liking. Lily was forever on edge, worrying and having flashbacks of the trauma that she had suffered back in Blighty. In fact most of the characters were not well developed in my opinion. Any disagreements were usually followed by one or other of the folk walking away or storming off thus the outcome of arguments were tantalisingly never resolved. The novel could have been shorter as I think there was too much padding e.g. descriptions of the other travellers i.e. 'the shady Fascist', the anxious woman and her daughter, the Jewess and her friends. I felt that the final chapter was outrageous.

I am sorry to have to write a less than glowing report but I must be honest in my reports otherwise what is the point!

### **Jennifer Moville**

**I love a good war story - they have me enthralled.**

At the beginning of the war in 1939 no one could possibly have envisaged the way things would turn out over the coming years.

Lily is the main character in this story and as she sets sail from England for Australia she finds herself in a whirlwind of cocktails, dancing, men and foreign shores.

As she finds herself heading for a new life away from the tragedy of her past she

*encounters people with lives more scandalous than she could ever have imagined. Two murders happen and every one is a suspect, war has broken out and all this in one crossing on a liner.*

*The author takes you on one boat trip that fills you with love, intrigue, gripped by finding out who the murderer is and leaves you page by page wanting to know if Lily will ever find the life she wants or deserves.*

### **Debbie Patrick**

***Very much like an Agatha Christie novel. I enjoyed this book. The crime wasn't the main part of the book. Learning about the characters sailing on the boat was. Their stories and their lives.***

*Based in 1939 with Europe on the brink of another war. Lily Shepherd leaves England on a liner for Australia. She is involved in cocktails, black-tie balls and finding herself mingling with different people.*

*Soon she discovers her new friends are not what they seem. The rich Max and Eliza Campbell, mysterious Edward, and fascist George are all running away from something.*

*By the time the ship docks, two passengers are dead, war has been declared, and life will never be the same again.*

### **Sue Broom**

***Well-constructed mystery, with a good deal of realistic period detail and an unexpected conclusion.***

*It is 1939, just months before the outbreak of WWII, and Lily is embarking on an adventure, sailing to Australia to work for a couple of years. Under the assisted-passage system for working folk, she expected to be confined to the lower decks and second-best amenities on board, but soon finds that a long sea voyage throws everyone together and she starts to mix with swanky first-class passengers, Jewish refugees, raucous Italian matriarchs, as well as other girls in a similar situation to her own - all looking for a fresh start for one reason or another and, as the weeks go by, those individual reasons become clear.*

*Not an unfamiliar scenario for a novel. What the author did really well for me, though, was to create an atmosphere of claustrophobia and menace. As Lily begins to want to avoid certain fellow passengers I sympathised with her inability to escape them if they were determined to seek her out. The*

*overwhelming feeling is of everyone watching everyone else, exposing the weak, criticising the insecure, and playing with others' emotions. The tension builds up relentlessly, the weather becomes unbearably sultry and no-one gets any real rest. Everyone is on edge and I found myself flinching along with Lily every time she is cornered by someone she hoped she'd escaped.*

*We know from the beginning that it's going to end in tears, but the way it does was a surprise to me and nicely done. A light read, with a good deal of realistic period detail, I particularly enjoyed the author's note at the end about the diary it was based on. And I love the cover too.*

### **Angie Rhodes**

*Europe is on the brink of war, and Lily Shepherd is on an Ocean Liner set for Australia and a new life,*

*Excited and a little apprehensive, after all she is leaving family and friends and the safety of her home behind. As soon as she steps on board and the ship sets sail, Lily embraces the freedom she feels, and it's not long before she meets fellow travellers. The Rich Max and Eliza Cambell, George whose thoughts of Germany and Hitler upset everyone he meets, and then there is Edward and his sister, both a little mysterious. All these people are running away, but from what? If Lily thought it would be an easy passage, she was wrong. Sea sickness is the least of her worries as by the time the ship docks in Australia two people are dead and life will never be the same for somebody on board. **This is for everyone who loves a mystery in the style of Agatha Christie. I can't wait for the next Rachel Rhys book!!***