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## LoveReading Reader reviews of **The Brilliant & Forever** By Kevin MacNeil

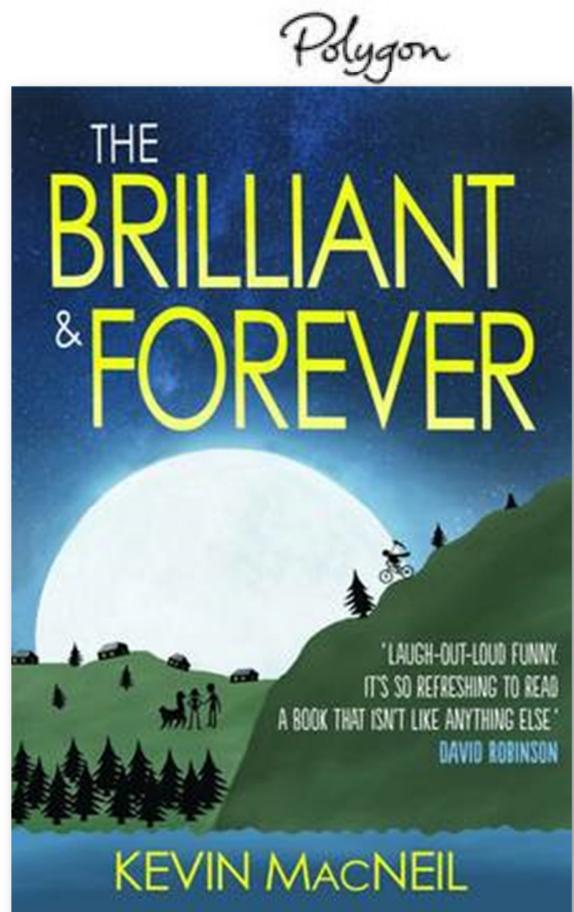
**Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.**

### **Helen Clark**

*A remote island full of writers, humans and alpacas strive to win the “Brilliant & Forever” Literary Festival. The stakes are high and the winner not only secures a book contract but gains high prestige and acclaim. Alpacas communicating through speech and the written word may be bizarre but Kevin MacNeil’s style of writing embraces the reader into his world and makes the story totally believable. Each of the thirteen contestants (twelve humans and one alpaca) read out their individual stories in a bid to reach glory. Kevin MacNeil’s ability to write such different and outstanding short stories that shocked, astounded, perplexed and impressed, cemented my impression of his outstanding skills as a writer.*

***This book has it all – rivalry, friendship, violence, empathy, bigotry and a huge helping of laugh-out-loud humour.*** Anyone who has attended a literary festival will recognise the wry, satirical personalities involved in such erudite establishments.

*The islanders intermix with familiarity and contempt and the social interaction between those living in whitehouses and blackhouses compounds when the different social classes compete in the Brilliant & Forever Festival. I laughed and cried.*



*I did not want this book to end and now I've finished it I want to read it all over again. To have so much imagination and to transpose it to an expressive and vivid book written in such a versatile style is a mark of a brilliant writer.*

*A totally **different but highly addictive read** that I cannot recommend highly enough.*

### **Linda Rollins**

***Men, women, children, alpacas - all live together on an island of writers. Funny, thought provoking, crazy and playful. 'The Brilliant & Forever' is clever and intelligent and deserves to win prizes.***

*The story follows three friends – a man, a woman and an alpaca (yes, really). Along with a host of other characters, they live as part of an island community that thrives on writing. Everyone writes, including the alpacas. Every year the island hosts “The Brilliant & Forever Literary Competition”; an event that produces winners and losers (on so many levels). The story sticks with the three friends in the run up to the competition – into which they will all be entering.*

*That is essentially the main story, but in this crazy concoction of literary tools and toys we are also treated to several individual short stories (entries to The Brilliant & Forever competition) as well as an inspiring ‘what’s life all about’ theme with thought-provoking nuggets scattered all the way through.*

*It’s a little madcap to say the least, hilariously funny in places. At the same time it’s tragic and disturbing and distressing. I was laughing loudly throughout the first third of the book, holding my breath in anticipation as I frantically flipped pages through the middle and was sobbing before the end. It’s a bit of mental weirdness that provokes all sorts of emotions and makes you think about your place in the universe. It’s a book that plays with language and doesn’t stick to rules. It’s a book that needs to be quoted from, talked about and read over and over again.*

### **Emily Curnow**

*This book is a profound yet bizarre study of humanity with its prejudices. MacNeil, uses community of human-like alpacas, to represent a social minority who are seeking equality with the 'Whitehouses', and yet who are treated with prejudices and cruelty. Through the alpaca metaphor the novel really criticises the problems within a western society. That said, it's **a novel of comedy, human emotion, alpaca emotion and the unexpected. I laughed my way through this unusual book.***

## **Sally Doel**

*This is a very 'different' book to anything I've read before. **It is strange and bizarre and funny and sad and deep. I really didn't know what to make of it at first, but decided to persevere - I'm so very glad I did.***

*The story is set on an island which is inhabited by people and alpacas in the main. There is a major annual literary festival taking place - which three best friends are taking part in - two human, one alpaca. They are all entering their own stories, but are constantly looking out for each other.*

*There are twists and turns and the characters are so interesting. There is one main story with other short stories incorporated (the readings at the B&F festival!).*

*I have now finished this book (quite quickly after my initial hesitation) and am now keen to read others by the same author - I am wondering if they're all as quirky and funny as this one!*

***I would recommend this - don't be put off by the 'strangeness' of it - it's great!***

## **Judith Griffith**

***An original, quirky story about 3 friends (2 people and an alpaca) and a literary festival like no other. But not for me, I'm afraid.***

*The premise of Kevin MacNeil's novel, 'The Brilliant & Forever' really interested me - the story of three friends (2 people and an alpaca) and the annual Brilliant & Forever literary festival that takes place on the island on which they live.*

*The novel tells the story of the build-up to this year's festival, in which the three of them have been chosen to compete, and the reader is made to feel part of the festival as the majority of the latter half of the novel consists of the festival contestants and their contest entry stories (told as on-stage narratives). The end of the contest isn't what you'd expect, however.*

*Unfortunately, I didn't enjoy the novel at all. A few of the contestants' narratives were quite enjoyable and there were a few play on words that made me smile. I understand that Kevin MacNeil was trying to be satirical and make a statement about people, equality, culture, acceptance and values, but I didn't feel anything towards the main characters and for me, it felt that he was trying too hard. Overall, the novel wasn't as good as I expected.*