

Lovereadings Reader reviews of How I Lost You by Jenny Blackhurst

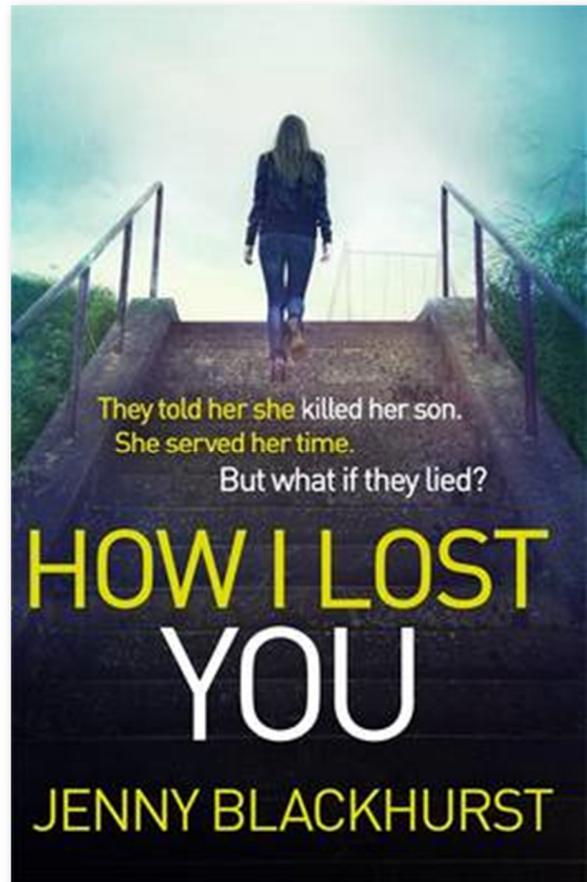
Below are the complete reviews, written by Lovereadings members.

Michelle Hodson – twitter @skibum

3 years in a Psychiatric Institute for a crime too awful to remember. The murder of your baby son. Your husband wouldn't lie about that! Or would he. A gripping read. I loved it from the start.

*Emma Cartwright is sent to a Psychiatric Institute for the murder of her 3 month old son. She has no recollection of this crime but is told by doctors that she is suffering from Puerperal psychosis a form of post natal depression. Surely the police, doctors and her loved ones would not lie. Upon her release she is sent a photograph of a 4 year old boy with her sons name on and the lie starts to unravel. **This book set off at a fast pace and kept me enthralled until the very end, when all is revealed.***

This is a wonderful debut novel with well rounded characters and I look forward to reading more from this author.



Doreen McKeown

I found this book a real page-turner.

I'll start by saying that I found this book a real page-turner. All the chapters are short and they entice you to read 'just one more' then 'just another one' because the story is compelling and you really want to know how it all ends up.

It begins with the central character, Susan Webster, being released after serving a sentence in a secure psychiatric prison for the murder of her three month old son, while she was suffering from post natal depression. However, Susan has no memory of this incident and when strange things start happening she becomes convinced that her son is actually alive. With the help of a close friend and a new acquaintance she sets out to prove this fact and in the process becomes involved in some dangerous situations.

There is another thread from years before running alongside the main story, which at first appears to have no relevance at all, but about halfway through the book it becomes apparent that it really is pivotal to the plot.

*There were times when Susan's character and behaviour just irritated me, and there were a few things along the way which didn't hang together. Also, when the truth was finally revealed it was just beyond belief, but **the whole thing did make for a gripping story, and one which gave me a few late nights!***

Liz Stein

An ambitiously convoluted plot, with an array of characters, this book will keep you gripped from the first page till the end.

I really enjoyed this book and was gripped from the first page. It started off well as a believable, unnerving, psychological thriller. It then became quite complex in terms of all the characters and the plot. I was unsure of, and distrusted, every character. In addition the characters were all interlinked which became unbelievable and I found it tricky to follow towards the end of the book when the story raced to its conclusion.

The plot was too convoluted for me, with too many twists, turns and red herrings which caused confusion. The subplot was also unrealistic and didn't quite fit with the tone of the rest of the book resulting in a somewhat unsatisfactory ending - predictably a big 'look good on tv' showdown which I'm not sure was necessary.

I have to say despite all this I couldn't put the book down. I just felt the book was going in a subtle, dark direction and it ended up going out with a bang instead. Maybe the plot was over ambitious for the writing style? Who cares, I'm looking forward to more from this author.

Mollie Mayson-Simpson

Susan Webster is trying to start her life anew, with a new name, in a different county where nobody knows her - or so she hopes. About four years ago Susan, suffering from post-natal depression, was accused of killing her 12 weeks old baby son, Dylan. She is only recently discharged on parole from the Oakdale, a high-security psychiatric unit. Susan does not remember killing her baby, but sees herself as bound to believe the many accusers who say that she did. Then an envelope pushed through her letterbox opens up another possibility. It contains a photograph of a little boy, labelled 'Dylan January 2013.' Is it possible that Susan did not kill her baby - that in fact he is still alive?

*Susan's progress in her quest for the truth, told in her own voice, makes thrilling and urgent reading. We want to turn the pages; we want to know what happened. But page-turning is slowed down by the need to navigate the short chapters interleaving Susan's account, printed in italics, told in third person and providing the 'back story'. This is cleverly done, but comes as an unwelcome distraction from the main business of the novel, just as we were getting to know Susan and being drawn into her world. But we have to read it, to know the background that Susan cannot tell us, and to make sense of the thrilling and terrifying conclusion to which we are hurtling with increasing speed. **Is this conclusion a little far-fetched and unlikely? Some readers might think so, but I urge them to 'suspend their disbelief and go with it.** This is an ambitious debut novel, and a worthy entrant to the genre of 'psychological crime fiction.'*

Sheila Dale

*This is a real page turner where no-one is who they seem to be. **Well written and a great debut novel.***

***I read this book in a couple of days as there is a great compulsion to see what happens next.** All the characters are finely drawn although most of them are not who they seem to be!*

I enjoyed the intermingling of the past and present but even when I finished the book I was a little confused as to who 'Billy' was or rather why he was referred to as Billy. I need to go back and read it again I think!

The tension builds well and I did not see the ending coming at all, if I have any criticism it is that the last few chapters, although tying up all the loose ends did come somewhat out of the blue and didn't really feel believable.

All in all a great first novel and I'm looking forward to the next one.

Emma Barton

This is an engrossing thriller that follows a woman recently released from a secure psychiatric hospital after being found guilty of murdering her 12 week old son. But did she?

I had really high hopes for this thriller and the first two thirds did not disappoint. Emma has recently been released from a secure psychiatric hospital after being found guilty of murdering her 12 week old son. When a photo of a toddler claiming to be her son, Dylan, is posted through her door she seeks help to discover the truth of what really happened.

The book keeps you guessing about the truth and who can be trusted, but towards the last part it becomes quite ridiculous and unbelievable. *I was all set to wholeheartedly recommend this novel but feel the ending lets it down so much that I cannot do this. There are also quite irritating elements within the writing that are clichéd and unnecessary (who has candlelit picnics in the park? Surely the candle would go out?!)*

This is Jenny Blackhurst's first novel and I really hope she writes more, but with a more realistic and thoughtful approach to the conclusion.

Tanya Thurling

This is the story of Emma Cartwright, previously known as Susan Webster. She was told she murdered her son although she has no recollection of doing so. After doing her time at a psychiatric institute, she starts trying to build a new life for herself. Until someone sends her a photo of a toddler named Dylan. What follows next is her journey to find out what truly happened that night, did she kill her son or is he still alive? But somebody really doesn't want her digging too deeply and it seems will do anything to try and stop her.

I finished this book in two evenings. I literally could not put it down and did the 'just one more chapter' thing a lot. It charges along from the very beginning. *Lots of action, and plenty for you to think about and question. Shady characters, amusing characters (Cassie made me laugh a few times) and at the center one very strong determined mother who refuses to give up on hope.*

The only slight downside was a few chapters in I was certain I'd read this book

before. Upon reaching the end I realized I hadn't read it but it did have a very similar plot to a book I have read (which I cannot for the life of me remember) but in saying that I enjoyed both of the books so it's not really a bad thing. It just nagged at me for the entire book.

I would highly recommend this book. You won't want to put it down.

Suzanne Marsh - www.ireadnovels.wordpress.com

*I wanted to read 'How I Lost You' by Jenny Blackhurst as I love reading psychological crime novels. **Jenny Blackhurst is a fantastic new talent. I will most certainly be looking out for her next novel.***

I am sure lots of crime readers are going to want to read and review 'How I lost You' by Jenny Blackhurst.

The story holds many twist and turns. I am sure that many readers will enjoy reading this novel as much as I have.

The police the doctor, and the court told Susan Webster that she had killed her twelve-week-old son Dylan by smothering her baby son with a cushion. But what if they lied? It appears that Susan has no memory of committing this awful crime killing her own precious baby son. The court found Susan Webster guilty and she was sent to Oakdale Psychiatric Institute for her crime. When Susan is released early on parole with a new identity and address she has the chance to rebuild her tattered life. No one will know her real name or where she lives. But one morning she finds an envelope address to Susan Webster inside was a photograph of a little four-year-old boy called Dylan. As Susan has no memory of killing her son how can she really believe he is dead.

The twist in this brilliant psychological crime novel I did not see coming. I am looking out for Jenny Blackhurst books in future she really does tip the scales keeping readers glued to the very last page.

Alison Bisping

Wow! What a book. It was a definite page turner and I struggled to put it down.

Susan Webster murdered her twelve week old son - so they said. Her husband Mark Webster found them. Susan served her time, was released early on parole and given the new identity of Emma Cartwright. However, she received a photograph which could be her dead son, Dylan, showing him aged four.

As a mother, what would you do? Would you think it was someone playing a cruel trick, or would you try to find out who sent the photo and why?

This was a book that kept me on tenterhooks until the end - a great psychological novel. I had no idea what the outcome would be and when I finished, the whole story stayed in my mind, with me 'reliving' what I had read. It's a book I will probably re-read, which is very rare.

I highly recommend that you read it - I don't think you will be disappointed!

Ann Alderton

An intriguing psychological thriller with multiple twists. Like the main character, who we are told has murdered her baby son, nothing is as it seems and nobody is who they appear to be.

*'How I Lost You' is a psychological thriller **which draws the reader in from the start with its dramatic storyline of a mother convicted of killing her baby son.** Following her release on parole with a new identity, she receives correspondence suggesting her son is still alive. The story develops at a page-turning pace and is both intriguing and compelling in its various twists and turns. Underlying the main storyline is a second narrative about a young gang led by the charismatic and sociopathic Jack, a shadowy figure throughout the novel, whose involvement in rape, murder and deception reveals a second mystery which is explored as the story develops. Although highly enjoyable and intriguing on many levels, the multiple unreliable characters and colliding plot lines offered too convenient a resolution to the mystery of the murdered son yet left me confused as to who was fully involved in the deception, with Mark, the ex-husband being the most troubling character in that regard.*

Reba Khatun

A great book. Jenny Blackhurst is an author to watch. What a brilliant read! I was hooked from the blurb.

What a brilliant read! I was hooked from the blurb. Despite what we're lead to believe about Susan Webster, the convicted baby killer I took a likening to her immediately. From the first page I was captivated by the storyline. Could Susan really have killed her 12 week old baby and blocked it all out? Or is it part of some big conspiracy and her son is still alive?

She's been released from a psychiatric institute with a new identity and address

but she's received a letter addressed to Susan Webster. It contains a photo of a 4 year old boy supposedly meant to be Dylan now. Although she was told by police, medical staff, professionals that she killed her son she doesn't believe it. A series of events sets her on an investigation that could get her killed before she finds out the truth.

Running parallel to Susan's story is another story set in the past about a couple of teenagers named Billy and Jack. You know somehow the two stories are connected but the connection's not clear until much later.

The last third of the book I read in one sitting despite being hungry and tired! You could feel Susan was getting so close to getting the answers she desperately needed. The sinister ending was unexpected but plausible.

Margaret Madden

A psychological thriller which will make you question who you should trust. A clever debut with plenty of twists and turns...

This debut from Jenny Blackhurst has all the ingredients for a great psychological thriller. A murder, a victim, a trial and all the darker moments related to losing a child. Then, the uncertainty of what really happened. Is there more to the story? The overall package is great but I had a few issues with the novel. The pace is very slow to start with. I actually abandoned the book a few times as I was losing interest. However, the pace picked up, new characters were introduced and it found its way to become a real page turner. I found myself rolling my eyes when Susan practically falls in love with a man she met twelve hours previously, and knows nothing about, and their interactions began to irritate me. Her one close friend, Cassie, could have been a much stronger character. She was just beginning to come to life, when the author pushes her aside in favour of the love interest/hero. She makes brief appearances towards the end, but more like an afterthought. A real pity as she was gutsy and gave some balance to Susan's weak and naive nature. In saying this, the red herrings and twists and turns are good. A few times I thought I had the plotline sorted, but I was wrong. The rushed ending was a surprise and the flashbacks come into context. I just hope that the slow pace at the start, and bizarre love interest don't put readers off. A confident debut, with a few tweaking issues, but I look forward to seeing more from this author...

Ian Harvey-Brown – twitter @IanHarveyBrown

Overall I was disappointed with this book. To me the title promised more than the book actually delivered.

It starts off well enough. Susan Webster arrives in a small town hoping to start a fresh life. Only she has a secret past and soon her secret is out. She has just been released after serving time at a place called Oakdale Psychiatric Facility for killing her son. She is desperate to put the past behind her but it's soon clear that other people have different ideas. In a series of separate points of view going back to 1992 we learn about a sinister group of posh Durham lads who indulge in satanic inspired rituals. We also learn about the death of a student Bethany Connors back in 1992. Turns out there's a connection between Beth's death and the death of Susan Webster's son Dylan. Susan along with her old friend Cassie and her new friend Nick Whitely are on the case. Only Nick isn't who he claims to be. In fact, as Susan's lawyer Jennifer explains 'nothing is as it seems...' which turns out to be rather an understatement.

Unfortunately the net effect of all this is to stretch credibility to breaking point.

Sian Spinney

Emma Cartwright otherwise known as Susan Webster has been in prison for murdering her 12 week old son, Dylan but did she actually kill him?

*I was slightly hesitant about reading this book due to the subject matter but I decided to give it a go. The characters are well thought out and I really cared about Emma/Susan and what led up to the accusation of murder. **I took a while to get in to the story but it soon became a book I couldn't put down.** It took me a long time to see where it was going which is always a good thing with a psychological thriller and even when at times I thought I had it figured out, I was wrong. I agree with some other reviewers that some characters could have been stronger but this is a really good debut and I look forward to reading other books by Jenny Blackhurst.*