



### Stolen

Written by Lucy Christopher  
New York: Scholastic, 2010, 304 pp.  
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A masterpiece first novel for Lucy Christopher, *Stolen* is a breathtaking story of survival. The story takes the form of a letter from captive to captor, drawing the reader in from the very beginning. It explores the harsh, unforgiving outback of Australia, the will to survive, and the tumultuous, sometimes confusing, relationship between kidnapper and captive.

Gemma, a British sixteen-year-old girl, is traveling with her parents when she meets a vaguely familiar handsome young man during her layover in the Bangkok airport. His captivating blue eyes make it impossible for Gemma to resist, and she quickly becomes smitten. Gemma's blind attraction and trust is natural, but she will soon regret her initial instincts as this entrancing man becomes her kidnapper. Gemma is horrified when she awakes in a hot little house and learns that her kidnapper, Ty, has spent years watching, planning, and waiting for her to come live with him. He has hopes she will understand his love, love him in return, and accept her new life. Gemma is tested in many ways, as she learns to live in the desert with a man she finds hard to hate, but should. Because of the poetic feel to the landscape and the romanticized image her captor has of her, Gemma slowly accepts what is happening and eventually begins to accept Ty's love. The conflicting feelings within Gemma are reflected in her letter, which leaves the reader conflicted as well until the very last page. This brilliant piece blurs the boundaries of friend and captor, contempt and love, reality and fantasy.

Christopher creates a novel with a disturbing plot that mirrors the unruly setting. It is beautifully written which conflicts with the reality of the story. Christopher has managed to explore a situation that is usually horrific, and show many more dimensions. The story is a reflection on events that have already happened, which gives the reader insights into Gemma's emotions, thoughts, confusions, and desperation. The reader is transfixed by the horror of the kidnapping, but finds that they also slowly fall in love with the kidnapper.

Christopher grew up in Australia, spending a lot of her time living, traveling, and working in the bush. She uses her feelings and personal experiences from being in the outback to develop the essence of the setting and to create Gemma and Ty's characters. More about her life is found at <http://www.lucychristopher.com/about>. The authenticity of Christopher's portrayal of the Australian outback is reflected in many ways. She describes the landscape as desolate, barren, hot, and unmapped, which is how many Australians would describe it as well. The animals and plants are native to Australia and that particular region. Brown snakes are prevalent throughout Australia and are feared due to their potent venom; this is the same snake that bites Gemma and ends Ty's fantasy. Information about Australia's Outback can be found at <http://www.outback-australia-travel-secrets.com/great-sandy-desert.html> and at Google books.

Ty is the only character representative of Australia, so does not provide an accurate insight to the peoples of this country. However, Ty does possess characteristics and traits that reflect Australian life and uses words and phrases that are common in Australian's phraseology.

Books that would complement *Stolen's* capture and captive relationship are John Fowles's *The Collector* (2006) or Ann Patchett's *Bel Canto* (2008). These two highly acclaimed young adult novels address issues of kidnapping and the main characters' struggles with Stockholm Syndrome.

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