

The Book Muse

Books, reading and writing

Ashleigh in Australian literature, Australian women writers, Book Industry, Books, challenges, literary fiction, Publishers, Reading, Reviews □ April 24, 2018April 6, 2018 □ 714 Words

Lovesome by Sally Seltmann

Title: Lovesome

Author: Sally Seltmann

Genre: Literary Fiction

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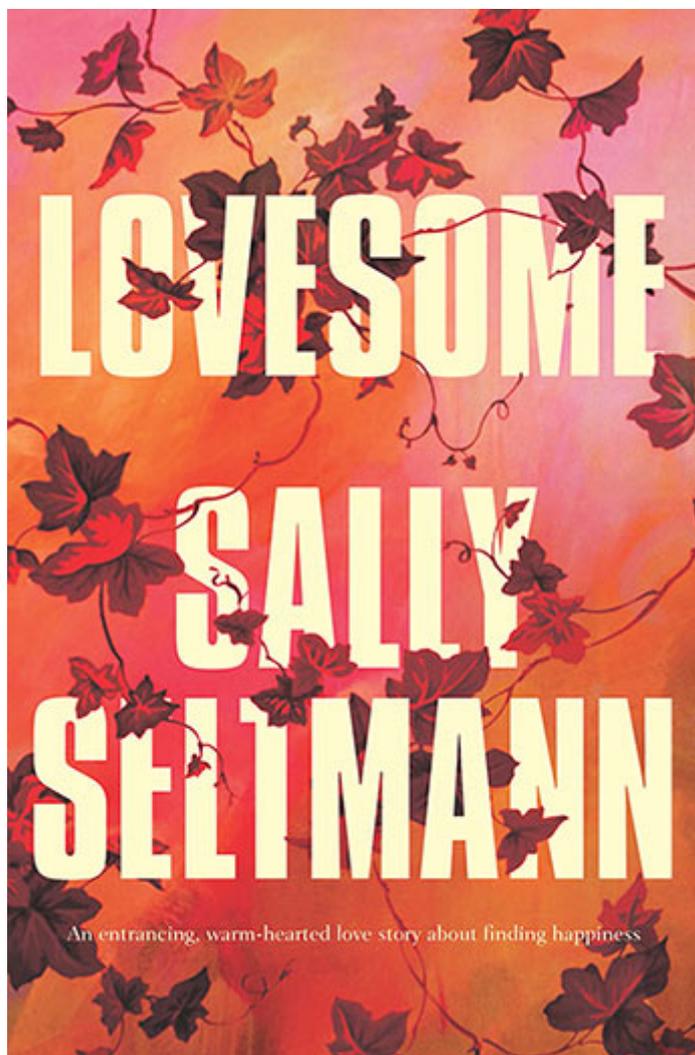
Price: \$29.99

Synopsis: An offbeat and beguiling story of finding your own happiness.

My warm breath makes a beautiful fog in front of me. It's times like this when I feel most alive. I feel free, and at one with the world and everything around me. It's an invigorating version of euphoria. But I don't want to arrive home to no one; I want someone to come home to.

It's 1995 and 21-year-old Joni Johnson is fresh out of art school and loving her life. Working at Harland, a French restaurant, makes her happy – it's as romantic as she is herself. Harland's owner, Lucy, and chef, Dave, make her evenings both entertaining and complicated. By day, Joni sets up her easel in her backyard bungalow, turns on her music, and paints.

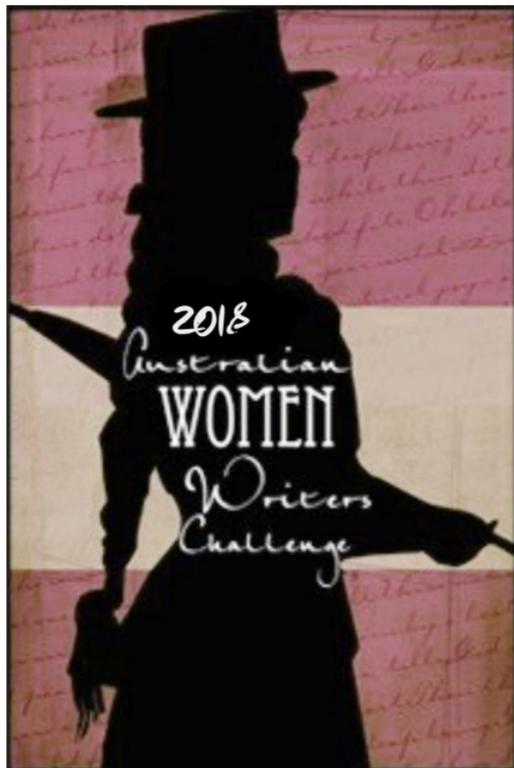
But when Joni's best friend, Annabelle, arrives on the doorstep one night ecstatic in love, everything changes. The life Joni has built for herself seems lacklustre in comparison to Annabelle's rising star. And when Annabelle makes a beeline for the one man who seems interested in Joni, it looks unlikely



that their friendship will survive.

Tender, funny and romantic, *Lovesome* is a triumph.

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I received *Lovesome* as a surprise book – and it was one that I decided I'd give a go. Joni Johnson is twenty-one in 1995. She is an artist, painting by day, and waitressing by night, going through the motions of her life in her early twenties, following her dream but also working to support herself, while her best friend, Annabelle, is living overseas in London as a singer. When Annabelle re-enters her life, it is like a tornado has landed – a tornado where Annabelle moves from excitement and hyperactivity about her current boyfriend coming to Australia, to a tense disagreement about James, the photographer for an article on Annabelle. When Joni and James show interest in each other, Annabelle's jealousy flares – so used to having men fall for her instantly, it seems that their once stable friendship might be falling apart.

Part romance, part literary and part coming of age, *Lovesome* is the kind of novel where the people you thought would fall in love, don't, and where the falling in love happens when and where you least expect it to in the storyline. The first half to a third is Joni exploring her life and trying to work out who she

is at twenty-one, having finished art school, and aiming for an art career, she finds herself working at eclectic Harland, where each room has a different theme for diners, and where the enigmatic and complicated Lucy, runs the restaurant. Each character is flawed – Joni seems to doubt herself at times, Lucy is all over the place, or so it seems until quite late in the book, where she reveals secrets to Joni she perhaps has not revealed to anyone else, and Annabelle comes across as selfish at times, interrupting Joni to talk about whatever is on her mind, leaving Dave, the head chef, as Joni's confidant.

At first I wasn't sure what to expect or think, but it is a coming of age story that reflects the way some young people find themselves and their passion, and the relationships that they are in and out of, platonic and romantic, family and work. It was a rather quick read, and at times quite compelling – I kept wondering which way things would turn, and how it would work out. As such, I felt it wasn't the typical love story that it might be seen as – rather, a unique one where the love interest pops up quite late, and although it happens quickly, didn't feel rushed at all, unlike some I have read – it felt natural, and worked well for Joni. The friendships between Joni, Annabelle, Dave and Lucy were just as strong as just as important – they showed that love can happen in a variety of ways for different people, and that it isn't always romantic. Showing that friendship is just as important, if not more important, than a romantic relationship, as shown by Joni and Annabelle's friendship, is a great thing to see in novels.