



Dear Lucy

Julie Sarkissian

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An enchanting narrator propels this unique first novel that will appeal to fans of *Room* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*.

I go down the stairs quiet like I am something without any weight. I open the door in the dark and the cold sucks my skin towards it. It is the morning but there is no sun yet, just white light around the edges. It is the time to get the eggs. Time for my best thing. The eggs they shine with their white and I do not need the light to find them. The foxes need no light either. I am a little like the fox, he is a little like me.

Lucy is a young woman with an uncommon voice and an unusual way of looking at the world. She doesn't understand why her mother has sent her to live with old Mister and Missus on their farm, but she knows she must never leave or her mother won't be able to find her again.

Also living at the farm is a pregnant teenager named Samantha who tells conflicting stories about her past and quickly becomes Lucy's only friend. When Samantha gives birth and her baby disappears, Lucy arms herself with Samantha's diary—as well as a pet chicken named Jennifer—and embarks on a dangerous and exhilarating journey to reunite mother and child. With *Dear Lucy*, Julie Sarkissian has created an unforgettable new heroine of contemporary fiction whose original voice, exuberance, and bravery linger long after the final page.

Dear Lucy Details

Date : Published April 23rd 2013 by Simon & Schuster (first published April 1st 2013)

ISBN : 9781451625721

Author : Julie Sarkissian

Format : Hardcover 352 pages

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary

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From Reader Review Dear Lucy for online ebook

Sarah says

What the HECK did I just read? Words fail.

Every single character was barking mad. Like, ok, Lucy is clearly meant to have some vague unspecified mental disorder, fair enough, but everyone else? Mister & Missus are scary-evil-crazy.

(**SPOILERS**)

He lets her talk him into impregnating their adopted daughter Stella, so they can fulfill her fanatical plan to have a son at whatever cost. Stella commits suicide whilst pregnant so they take in another young pregnant girl, Samantha, and plan to steal her baby too. They are looking after Lucy because her own mother can't cope with her (and seems overwrought & deluded to the point of mental instability also). Samantha is normal enough at first but once the baby is born she starts making all these loopy plans about running away and living off canned food in the woods with Lucy and the baby or something and shaves her head.

There was also talking chicken named Jennifer who lived in Lucy's pocket. I assumed she was a figment of Lucy's imagination or possibly a manifestation of some kind of split personality disorder, BUT then her mum started talking to it and acting like it was real too, at which point I gave up hunting for any vestiges of sanity in this whirling mess of bizarre.

I read to the end only because I really wanted to know what happened to the baby but should NOT have been surprised to find a vague, up-in-the-air ending which revealed nothing about the fate of any of them. Typical.

What infuriates me the most about this sort of claptrap is that it's the sort of thing that wins all the literary awards. Intellectual types will probably fall over themselves to call it 'brave' and 'groundbreaking'.

Cindy says

3.5 stars

“Sometimes the best thing you can do for your family is stay away from them.”

Lucy's mother has left her on the farm, thus turning her into "Lucy on the farm". Her mother, Mum Mum, tells her never to leave the farm or else she won't be able to find her when she returns.

Lucy on the farm only has one friend. Samantha. Samantha with her red hair and green eyes. Samantha with the baby growing inside her.

The farm belongs to Mister and Missus. They have agreed to take in Samantha and Lucy. All is well on the farm. That is, until the day Samantha's baby is taken.

Now it is up to Lucy to find the baby & bring it back to the person who was there since the first day, Samantha.

...

I don't know how I feel about this book.

On one hand, I liked it because it was unique and mysterious. But on the other hand, the ending left me extremely unsatisfied.

Many times during the story I found myself saying "what the hell is going on here?!"
And usually that's a very, very good thing. But I truly don't know what to make of this book.
I would have rated it higher had I know what happens next...

Dear Lucy is not like anything I've read before. It is narrated by 3 different people, all very different.

First, we have Lucy. The only thing she wants is to be with Mum Mum again. She hangs on to the hope she will come back for her one day and they will be a family again. She becomes friends with Samantha. Samantha will teach her the words she needs to know in order to communicate to people how she feels. When the baby is taken away, Lucy sets off with her chicken, Jennifer, to find the father of the baby. Maybe he'll help her find out where the baby is.

Then there's Samantha. Samantha keeps a diary. In the diary she writes down the truth. The truth of how she feels and what she plans to do. She tells Lucy about her baby's father. But does she tell her the truth?

And Missus. We mostly get flashbacks when we're in her head. She's a creepy woman.

-Lucy's parts were interesting. She reminded me of Junie B. Jones a couple of times. (For ex:
"Lucy," she says, "why don't you wipe down the bathtub?"

Because I don't know how to wipe down the bathtub. That is why I don't.)

-Samantha's were a little sad towards the end.

-Missus' were disturbing. Whenever I think about Mister and Missus I picture this:

But despite thinking she was creepy, I liked her p.o.v. the most. I *desperately* wanted to know what happened during the dance. BUT I DIDN'T GET AN ANSWER! (Well, I mean, I'm sure I do *know* what happened, but a part of me just doesn't want to believe it...)

There's something seriously wrong with this old woman.

Overall, the story's not bad. It would have been better had the "mystery" been revealed.

Thinking about it is making me frustrated. I guess the author wanted us to come to our own conclusions, but, come on! I think I deserve to know what happened!

I might have rated it 4 stars had I been informed.

But, alas, no.

I like an inconclusive ending as much the next person-- wait, who am I kidding, NO I DON'T!

Call me crazy, but I like knowing what happened in the beginning and what will happen in the end, thank you very much.

I'm staying hopeful that the author will write another novel & include these characters because a story like

this can't be left unanswered!

I have to know what will become of Samantha, Lucy, and the red-headed baby.

I have to know the truth about what happened on the night of Stella's first dance.

I have to know if the baby is a boy or girl. Since it alternated between "him" and "her".

And I have to know if Lucy's mother ever plans on coming back for her.

This is the author's first novel and I believe it's pretty good. The writing was not unbearable and the interactions between characters didn't feel forced. There are many authors that have been writing for *years* and still can't get their characters to feel real.

I just hope the author doesn't end every book like this...

If you like books with unanswered questions at the end, this is the book for you.

(view spoiler)

Anne says

I received this book for free as part of a Goodreads giveaway.

I don't know what to make of 'Dear Lucy'. One of the cover blurbs likens the book to 'Room' and I can see some of the similarities in the voice of the main character (the reader continuously picks up on the fact that something isn't quite right in the story, emphasizing the 'unreliable narrator' trope), but done here much less skillfully than in 'Room'. The flow of 'Dear Lucy' seems stunted and uneven (to be fair, a degree of this is due to Lucy's unspecified mental disability) but the reveal that there's much more to the story than what unassuming Lucy sees takes forever. The book also switches between at least three narrators and it gets difficult to follow all the nuances of what each character is going through. There are few (if any) details that allow the reader to put the story in space and time and for me, personally, that's a big turnoff.

****SPOILER****One of the biggest problems I had was with the reveal that one of the secondary characters was sexually assaulted by her own father (but perhaps at her mother's encouraging? What??). It seems like this has become the default setting for almost any female character in a coming-of-age type of novel. I've read this same story over and over again—'Swamplandia!', 'Girlchild', 'She's Come Undone', 'The Homecoming of Samuel Lake', 'Once Upon a River', and on and on and on. The tone of the novel is difficult to sort out, the characters are oddly written, and I'm left with as many questions as I had when I began the book. It's entirely possible that I don't understand what the author is trying to do but I just found this book to be very strange.

latybug says

I received this book as a First Reads offer.

I teach junior high, and every year I have students in my classes who are learning disabled, emotionally disabled, mentally disabled, or physically disabled. Sometimes they may have a combination of disabilities. While others have commented that it was difficult for them to read Lucy's voice, I actually liked her voice the best. It's hard to understand what is going on inside some of my students' heads (disabled or not) and I enjoyed being inside Lucy's head. She doesn't have many filters, and that makes her honest and true. She loves and she doesn't hold back.

I also liked to be inside the heads of Missus and Samantha, although I despaired at their paths towards emotional breakdown.

It would have been intriguing to see inside Mister's head in this story, to see his perspective. I understand though, that this novel is a female-centered story, and the male perspective may have intentionally been left ambiguous. I'd be interested to read a companion story, about the same events, but narrated by Mister, Allen, and Rodger Marvin.

The only part of the novel I did not like (hence only 4 stars) was the ending, or actually the lack of an ending. Others have commented about how the story just stops abruptly, and the reader is left hanging with no closure. I concur. I want to know what happens to Lucy and Baby, to Samantha, and to Missus. Even if the ending is not a happy one, I want to know what the ending is. Perhaps one day the author will write a sequel to let us know how everything turns out.

Overall, this book was an enjoyable read for me. I would read more from this author in the future.

Laurie Larson-Doornbos says

Samantha and Lucy spend their days and nights on the farm of Mister and Missus, little more than hired hands, but without the pay. They weed, stitch, gather eggs, feed the pigs. Both are sad souls, left on the farm's doorstep when no one else would have them. Samantha is sixteen and pregnant, waiting for the birth of a baby that won't be hers for long. Lucy is a child in a woman's body with a simple mind and sometimes violent temper. Even though mum mum locks her in the bedroom when she goes out, even though mum mum doesn't send Lucy to school with the other children, even though mum mum screams at Lucy for what she cannot do, Lucy waits devotedly for her

return. So for Lucy, the most important thing, is to put together Samantha and her baby and the father so they can live in a "special place ... so when the baby opens its eyes on its very first day it sees its family."

While the farm may seem idyllic, Mister and Missus share a dark past. And when Samantha discovers the truth of their secret in the attic, she begins to plan their escape. When Mister and Missus prevent her from following through, Samantha makes Lucy promise to find her baby. Lucy's quest to find baby's father leads her off the farm and into trouble--but lands her back with mum mum. This time, mum mum hopes Lucy will become the "house girl" and enlists the help of a cleaning woman to train Lucy. Although delighted for a time to be with mum mum, Lucy's heart calls her back to the farm and the baby. A newly hatched chick named Jennifer, nestled in her dress pocket, serves as Lucy's power inner voice which pulls her on towards the loving family she never had.

A little bit Of Mice and Men and a little bit Curious Incident of the Dog at Midnight, Dear Lucy is haunting and poetic. A plot that might otherwise seem outlandish is entirely believable, in part because of the fresh voice of Lucy's inner world. The simple young woman who could do no right returns to the farm, to Samantha's rescue, led on by the power of "promises, which are the truth."

Lou says

"We put our arms around each other. We become two circles that don't have any beginnings or ends. Inside our circles she can be safe as the inside of the eggs."

Lucy a character from this story who was memorable and beautiful in her keen a unique outlook on her world. She has problems in reading and communicating, words don't come out so easily like everyone else that she encounters in her life, she has to think and rethink and then try to say what she feels as best as she can in words. She brings me to that great story *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner and his male character Benji the unique disadvantaged man that was innocent and vulnerable in so many ways, Lucy is not far from that similar portrait that Faulkner crafted with Benji. This author has structured this tale with chapters from the narrative of Lucy in the first person, visceral and with short declarative sentences in relation to the way she thought and communicated.

The way this story is told was in some ways similar in the style as that great story of Faulkner's.

The characters in this story went through various elements, that included that of motherhood, trust, betrayal, and love.

The story has you feeling and thinking. Bizarre at times but all from a special characters eye, we mostly are able to read and just about understand the world around us, where Lucy might not so easily understand this things we take for granted and the author has successfully shown us how Lucy does see things in this story.

A story unique and original, rearranging the way a story is orthodoxly told.

A Great achievement for a debut and has you wondering what she is going to craft next.

This was the great expectations of Lucy, a character that will find a way to warm your heart.

Review also available @ <http://more2read.com/review/dear-lucy-a-novel-by-julie-sarkissian/>

Luanne Ollivier says

Dear Lucy is Julie Sarkissan's newly released debut novel. I can't imagine being a first time author waiting for readers' reactions to your work. So Julie, let me say right from the top - I knew from the first few pages that I was going to love it.

Lucy has trouble communicating with the world.

"What's the matter with you?"

I know that question.

What's the matter with you?"

When someone asks you that question, there is no answer."

Lucy has been sent by her Mum mum to live on a farm with Mister and Missus. She knows she must never leave the farm or Mum mum won't know where to find her. Lucy is mostly happy on the farm - she likes collecting the eggs from the chicken coop. Samantha's family has sent her to the farm as well - to await the birth of her illegitimate child. And with Samantha, Lucy has found her first and only friend. When Samantha gives birth and the baby disappears, Lucy knows what she must do.

"A family, they are there from the beginning of each other." She has to find the baby for Samantha.

Although she cannot read, she takes Samantha's journal and a helper on her quest - Jennifer the chicken. Yes, a chicken, who plays a major role in the book - and has a pretty big personality.

Lucy captured my heart from the beginning. Her view of the world is so innocent, so logical and so hard for others to understand. I could see danger and heartbreak coming as I turned pages and I just wanted to protect her. Samantha's story also captured my emotions, but in a different way. Sarkissian has a magical way with words.

"Sometimes there are people that you use words to say good-bye because you are going to separate from them. But other times there are people that you say good-bye to with words but inside your heart you never say good-bye to them. Mum mum is one of those people. There is a thread and the thread is so long that it lasts forever. Your heart is tied to one end of the thread and your mother's heart is tied to the other end. So really it's not a good-bye. No matter how far away you go, you never have to say good-bye."

I fell in love with Lucy and her outlook. ("And I liked to wave. That is how branches dance with the wind.") But Missus - well, she's a whole 'nother story. Sarkissian employs multiple narrators, telling the story of Dear Lucy in alternating chapters. I always enjoy this method of storytelling. There's a delicious tension in seeing the same events from different perspectives. Or having a piece of information that one of the characters doesn't.

Sarkissian has woven an addicting story, but she also deftly explores the theme of motherhood from many viewpoints.

Dear Lucy is a unique, beguiling, captivating read that I devoured in a day. This is a title I'll definitely be recommending to everyone and I'll be eagerly awaiting the next novel from this fresh new voice.

Fans of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* would love this title.

Agatha says

Did not care for this one and felt like author was trying to pull a fast one on me, which ticked me off. She is a good writer, but she needs to write about what she knows, not about just "hot topics" that she thinks are going to hook in readers: adoption, special needs, unplanned pregnancy, etc. I had the beginnings of two possible reviews planned out in my head, and was going to go with whichever one best fit the mood I was in after finishing. They began with:

1) "NO, JUST NO." -- this was if I was in a crappy mood and didn't have patience to review this maudlin claptrap. . . I still feel this way a little bit. . .

2) "Author says she studied creative writing. . .well, this sure is CREATIVE, b/c she obviously does not have life experience with any of these issues, but just creates a fable-like fantasy in her head and uses a lot of pretty words to try to hook the reader in. Moreover, she uses the dept. heads of her creative writing programs (Joyce Carol Oates and Ann Hood) to write supercilious blurbs for the back of the book, which combined to annoy me even further."

Brief summary: Lucy is mentally challenged and her mother puts her on a farm with two elderly folks while she (mom) apparently tries to get her life back in order so she can eventually (?) bring Lucy back home.

Another resident of the “farm” is a pregnant unwed mother, Samantha. The elderly residents of the farm, it is revealed, have a bizarre fascination with trying to have a biological child (they have a failed adoption in their past) and the grandma-figure manipulates Samantha into promising to place her child for adoption with them. When she changes her mind, Lucy tries to help her.

Grade: D- for not using the God-given writing talents she apparently has to write about something real, instead of just something invented that she pulled out of the air to try to tug on readers’ heart strings and sell books. . . .STUPID. Go back to living in Brooklyn and teaching creative writing seminars, Ms. Sarkissian, you self-described millennial hipster, you. .

Jeana says

While this was well-written, I did not care for the story at all. Too much icky, crazy stuff going on. Still, I pressed on to find out what happened to Stella and the baby at the end, and you never even find out. This was a cover buy but I probably should have considered the reviews a little more.

Tania says

the dirt that was underneath the car chases behind. the dirt doesn't want to be left behind. it liked the feeling of something touching it from above. it doesn't want that feeling to leave. But just because you want a thing to be yours doesn't mean it stops being able to leave.

3.5 stars. Dear Lucy started a bit slow, and it took me two or three chapters to get used to Lucy's unique voice. But once I got into it, I thought the author did an amazing job of getting us inside the head of a mentally challenged grown up girl. Lucy is mostly a good girl, but every now and again, when things don't go her way or she does not understand what is happening in the world around her, she gets stuck. And for me these descriptions of what is happening in her brain while she gets stuck is the best part of the book. I thought this was done even better than *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

The story is not only about Lucy's voice though it looks at relationships gone wrong between mothers and daughters. Firstly we meet Lucy, whose mother has problems dealing with her special needs, and who abandons her. Secondly, we are introduced to Missus, who can't bear children, and who becomes obsessed with giving her husband a boy. Samantha has given up her baby for adoption, and now has to deal with the consequences. As you can gather this is not an easy story, but I thought it was done brilliantly. I can't wait to see what Julie Sarkissian will do next.

*Netgalley copy

Elizabeth says

I was excited to read “Dear Lucy,” but one or two chapters in I was afraid I was going to be disappointed. Writing a book that is written in a very particular voice is risky, and I wasn’t sure Julie Sarkissian had succeeded. But soon I became less aware of the voice and absorbed in the story. Lucy’s voice became less of

a distraction and was important to the story, allowing for some beautiful observations. Still, I was glad that there were two other narrators as well. Both Samantha and Missus were interesting characters, and their voices added depth to the story that couldn't have been there if it were only told from Lucy's perspective. Interestingly, neither of these additional narrators is particularly reliable either, but that is part of what builds the suspense, part of what made it impossible for me to put this book down. The true characters of the narrators and the people around them are revealed slowly. Some points never become completely clear. But the emotional currents read as completely true, and the way the language captures human relationships is breathtaking.

Alice Bola says

This is probably one of the strangest reviews I have ever written. I thought Dear Lucy was brilliant. The concept was remarkable. It was creative, well written and unlike anything I have ever read, except for maybe Room by Emma Donoghue (read our review here). It was haunting and beautiful. I fully understand why this novel will get the critical acclaim it deserves. That being said, I did not like it at all. Shocking, right? I'm not mad I read it, in fact I highly recommend it.

I know it's strange to voice all these accolades while holding steadfast to my dislike. I think my major disconnect was with the characters. I didn't like Lucy or her mother or Mister or Missus or Samantha. I was shocked people like this exist, even in fiction, especially Missus. My favorite character was Jennifer the talking chicken. I tried to pinpoint what bothered me so much them, but in doing that I was losing sight of what good Dear Lucy has. It is wonderful. I was riveted from beginning to end. Some of the subject matter was upsetting but necessary. I did guess at one major plot point fairly early on in the novel but was still shocked to see it come to fruition in print.

I do recommend you read Dear Lucy and remember the name Julie Sarkissian. This is the first novel in what I'm sure will be a very successful career for her. I will definitely read her again.

Andrea P. says

This review and others can be found on Cozy Up With A Good Read

Lately, I've had a thing for books with a very unusual narrator. There was The Silence of Bonaventure Arrow, about a boy who could not speak and saw emotions and colours, and now there is Dear Lucy. Lucy is an interesting character, she is special and doesn't understand a lot about what is going on around her. Her mother has left her on this farm with "Mister and Missus" because she is not able to take care of Lucy on her own. This story is told from three different perspectives, there is Lucy (who we follow for most of the book), then Samantha (another girl living on the farm), and Missus. This story was interesting, Lucy has become friends with Samantha, a pregnant teenage living on the farm and the only one who really looks out for Lucy, and in her own way Lucy looks out for Samantha.

I was definitely intrigued with the synopsis, Samantha's baby goes missing and Lucy goes on this journey to reunite the mother with her child. In the end, I think that there was so much more to this story, and that part was such a small part of the overall story. This story really shows a beautiful friendship, and even someone who has no understanding of the world, can be loyal and be there to help someone when they need it.

This book took me awhile to get through, as much as the story intrigued me, I had difficulty getting through the writing style. Readers see things from Lucy's perspective and I found it difficult to grasp her voice and really understand what she was saying and why she did things at times. The thing that I did love about Lucy and that kept me reading this book was her willingness to do anything to help Samantha, and her interactions with her pet chicken. I felt like Jennifer (the chicken) was another part of Lucy that helped her realize things she couldn't do on her own, almost like bringing out a part of Lucy's mind that has been closed off.

There was an air of mystery around the owners of the farm, Mister and Missus, I wanted a little more of their story. I found their part of the story to be a little disturbing (I can't say much more about it without spoiling the story). I did feel for what they went through but at the same time, I disliked their characters so much. There were a couple of characters that I felt creeped out by throughout the book.

Though I had issues connecting with the story and the characters, I do think that this was a beautiful story, it just wasn't for me at this time. I can see many people enjoying this story. I found the main idea behind this story is doing whatever you can to get the answer. Lucy searches for what she believes in and she will do anything to help Samantha. I think this book definitely had a lot going for it, and I think I could have enjoyed it more if the narrative was not so disconnected (but then this story would not be what it is, and would not be Lucy's story).

Jaime Boler says

I have never felt fiercely protective of a character before, but the urge to shield Lucy, the main speaker in Julie Sarkissian's quirky, unique, and weirdly beautiful debut, *Dear Lucy*, overtook me. And there's a good reason why: Lucy is developmentally delayed and has issues with behavior and language yet she is filled with determination and love. Lucy is limited, yes, but she looks at the world with wonder and sees it as full of possibility. Lucy is extraordinary and she certainly becomes special to us as her eyes are open to the beauty around her.

"It is time to get the eggs. Time for my best thing," Lucy says. "I get the eggs for our breakfast. They are alive. When you eat something that is alive you take the life for yourself. You can't think of it as taking life from another thing, you think of it as giving life to yourself." This sentiment comes from Lucy's friend, Samantha. "Samantha knows" because "there is something growing inside of her too." Samantha, a pregnant teenager, is also one of the narrators in *Dear Lucy*. She does not want her baby; instead, she plans on giving the child up for adoption.

Sarkissian sets *Dear Lucy* on an isolated and rather mysterious farm. The setting makes the story dark and desolate and allows a sense of menace to loom over the entire novel. Mister and Missus, owners of the farm, only add to the story's gloom and doom environment. Missus functions as Sarkissian's third and final narrator.

The author could have told her tale solely from Lucy's perspective, but then we would not have so many different windows and perceptions of the story, making *Dear Lucy* richer and more satisfying. Sarkissian writes each narrator in *Dear Lucy* with vulnerability, though some characters are more defenseless than others. Weakness is sometimes overt, like with Lucy and Samantha; other times, helplessness can be hidden, as it is with Missus, who feels inadequate for not giving her husband a son.

Dear Lucy gives up its secrets slowly yet pleasingly, building mystery and suspense. Especially when Sarkissian reveals the reason why Lucy is on the farm. Lucy gets a thought into her head and cannot let it go.

Because she is so single-minded, she can be willful and even prone to violence. Her impulses rule her, leading me to wonder if perhaps her hypothalamus is to blame for her behavior. Lucy's mother could not handle her daughter any longer and put her in the care of Mister and Missus.

Lucy believes her stay on the farm is temporary and believes her Mum mum will return for her, as she promised. She must listen to Mister and Missus always so they will allow her to stay on the farm, where "Mum mum will know where to find" her. Lucy takes this literally and is loath to even get in a car or go on foot off the farm. She longs for her mother and yearns to be called "Dear Lucy" as Mum mum wraps Lucy in her arms protectively and lovingly.

The farm becomes a haven of sorts for Lucy as she waits for Mum mum. She develops an attachment to Samantha and to the chickens from whom she collects the eggs. Lucy is so happy when Samantha gives birth and decides to keep the son she delivers, but her world comes crashing down when Samantha's baby is taken from her. Samantha begs Lucy for help.

Lucy then sets out on an adventure like no other, a journey that takes her farther away from the farm than she has ever been. She worries Mum mum will not be able to find her again, but Lucy presses on. She is not alone on her mission. Jennifer, a talking chicken, accompanies her and tells Lucy what to do. Jennifer is everything that Lucy is not: tough, smart, mature, and wise. For me, the chicken was a part of Lucy's psyche that appeared right when she needed it the most.

Dear Lucy is told in three distinctive and gorgeous voices. Sarkissian's imagination, originality, and amazing talent captivated me and would not let me go. Eerie and atmospheric, Dear Lucy reads like southern gothic, unsettling and intriguing and at the same time urging the reader and Lucy onward.

Julia Fierro says

Brilliant. A book like no other. Daring in structure, particularly in point-of-view, voice and language, but truly successful in terms of meaning, emotional implication, psychological complexity and story. I read the last half of the book in one sitting!

I am proud of the writer for taking these ambitious risks and for her editor in seeing the great potential this book has to move many readers.
