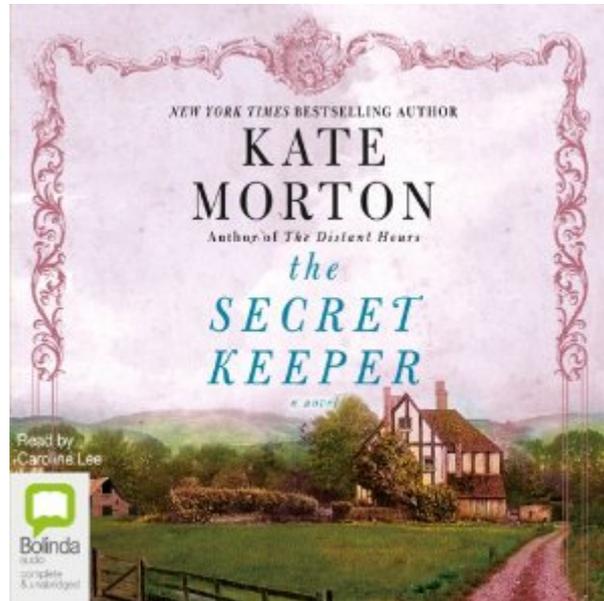


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# The Secret Keeper



## Synopsis

England, 1959: Laurel Nicolson is 16 years old, dreaming alone in her childhood tree house during a family celebration at their home, Green Acres Farm. She spies a stranger coming up the long road to the farm and then observes her mother, Dorothy, speaking to him. And then she witnesses a crime. Fifty years later, Laurel is a successful and well-regarded actress, living in London. She returns to Green Acres for Dorothy's 90th birthday and finds herself overwhelmed by memories and questions she has not thought about for decades. She decides to find out the truth about the events of that summer day and lay to rest her own feelings of guilt. One photograph, of her mother and a woman Laurel has never met, called Vivian, is her first clue. *The Secret Keeper* explores longings and dreams, the lengths some people go to fulfill them, and the strange consequences they sometimes have. It is a story of lovers, friends, dreamers and schemers, play-acting, and deception told against a backdrop of events that changed the world.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 19 hours and 53 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Bolinda Publishing Pty Ltd

Audible.com Release Date: October 15, 2012

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B009R5Q51W

Best Sellers Rank: #65 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Historical Fiction  
#202 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Family Saga #566 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical

## Customer Reviews

It was raining, cold and damp the day I started to read Kate Morton's latest book - *The Secret Keeper*. And the perfect day to snuggle in to my favourite chair and lose myself in Morton's absolutely wonderful storytelling. The prologue of *The Secret Keeper* is a show stopper it will hook you and the tale will keep you enthralled until you turn the last page. Early 1960's England. Sixteen year old Laurel lives an idyllic life with her beloved mother, father, her three sisters and brother in an isolated house in the countryside - until the day a stranger surprises their mother outside their

home. Laurel, hidden in a treehouse, witnesses this meeting - and it's shocking outcome. And although life carries on afterwards, there's an unmistakable rift in the fabric of their lives."There were moments, Laurel solemnly believed, in which a person reached a crossroads; when something happened, out of the blue to change the course of life's events."Fast forward to 2011. The siblings are called back to Greenacres Farm; their mother Dorothy is approaching her 90th birthday and her health is not good. Laurel sees these final days as her last opportunity to get answers from her mother as to what happened that day over fifty years ago."Not about Ma. I mean that young woman. She was a different person back then, with a whole other life we know nothing about. Do you ever wonder about her, about what she wanted, how she felt about things - Laurel sneaked a glance at her sister - the sorts of secrets she kept?Morton again effectively uses her technique of past and present narratives to tell Dorothy's story. We meet her in 1941 as 'Dolly', a vivacious seventeen year old girl with dreams and ambitions.

Set alternately between the present and the past, much of this mystery novel takes place in London during the Blitz, when the Luftwaffe bombed the UK for fifty-seven consecutive nights, killing over 40,000 civilians. Laurel Nicholson, a successful actress in her sixties, reflects back to her teen years in the 1960's and a crime she witnessed her mother, Dorothy (now ninety and dying), commit outside their Greenacres farmhouse. The Blitz years' sections belong to Dorothy, which Laurel pieces together from scraps of memorabilia that her mother possesses. It opens up to the reader as Dorothy's story, primarily. As Laurel and her siblings gather for Dorothy's last days, the reader follows the trail of clues revealed through memories, inquiry, and Laurel's amateur sleuthing. As the pages turn, we get more involved and intrigued by the intertwined lives of Dorothy, a woman from Dorothy's past named Vivien (and Vivien's husband, Henry Jenkins), and Dorothy's former beau, Jimmy. The most engaging aspect of this book is the smooth narrative and the intimate voices of the past and present. Morton creates characters that stand out, especially those from the WW II period. Dorothy is a complex woman trying to carve a future from the fear and impermanence that wartime creates. You can fairly hear the explosions in the background. Vivien is an enigmatic woman who never ceases to pique the reader's interest, and her husband, Henry, the celebrated author, adds to the curiosity. Jimmy, the photographer and Dorothy's love interest, is the moral center. What kind of relationship did Dorothy and Vivien have? Were they friends, or adversaries, or mere acquaintances? There's a photo of them standing together, emanating defiance and daring.

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