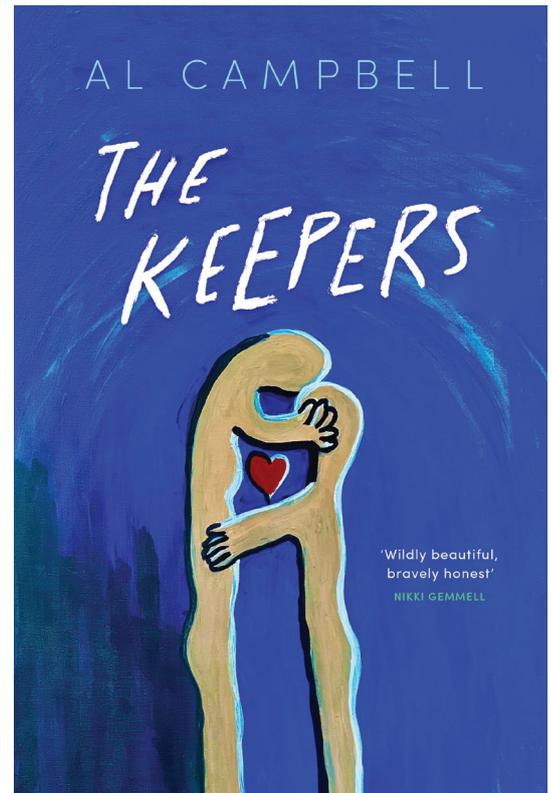


This daring and dazzling debut shines a light on those who are let down by the systems that are supposed to care for them, or by parents who can't love, revealing the unsung heroes of our communities.

Jay is devoted to the care of her teenage twins who view the world as differently as it views them. Frank is sweet, sensitive and bullied, while whip-smart Teddy needs an iPad to speak. With an absent husband and battling a nightmare bureaucracy, Jay leans heavily on Keep, her lifelong half-real friend. But in the corner of her eye lurks her mother, and a childhood Jay knows she can't ever outrun.

Jay believes she is managing quite well, with a half-grip on this half-life of hers. That is, until Teddy starts to get sick, refusing to eat, while doctors refuse to listen, confounding everything Jay thought she knew about what lies ahead.

*The Keepers* is an incredible and fiercely honest novel about the damage done by parents who can't love, the failures of a community that only claims to care, and the resilience of those whose stories mostly go untold.



#### BOOK DETAILS

C-format paperback | 978 0 7022 6548 8  
\$32.99

'Al Campbell is a hell of a writer, able to move seamlessly from blunt realism to vivid fantasy, from intimate whisper to full-throated howl.'

**Emily Maguire**

'*The Keepers* is an extraordinary piece of writing. A constellation of love and pain opening up to the reader in a magical and terrifying way. It's utterly remarkable.'

**Annabel Crabb**

'Wildly beautiful, bravely honest, devastating and hopeful but most of all, brimming with love. *The Keepers* will break your heart.'

**Nikki Gemmell**

## Questions

1. *The Keepers* is essentially a love story – a story of a love so ferocious it bares its teeth. But it is also a story of people who cannot love, and the lifelong consequences of that. How successfully does the novel balance these light and dark themes?

2. Jay has a close and unique relationship with her boys. What is your favourite moment between her and Frank or Teddy (or both)?

[MORE QUESTIONS OVER PAGE](#)

**Questions**

3. Abuse and neglect is a central concern of *The Keepers*. However, in surveys conducted both in Australia and around the world, the care and welfare of people with a disability routinely ranks last as the social issue of most concern to respondents. Why do you think this is?
4. Jay has a complex relationship with Jerrik yet, no matter how poorly he treats her, she remains in their loveless marriage. Why does she choose to stay with him?
5. Some parents come to realise that raising children with special needs requires skills and endurance they simply do not, and will never, possess. Given this, what do you make of the character of Jerrik?
6. How did you respond to the character of Lonnie as a mother who is so unstable, violent and manipulative? Did you feel any sympathy for her, given what her own upbringing must have been like at the hands of JG?
7. Who or what is Keep? What role does he play in Jay’s life?
8. The author intersperses real-life media stories about the mistreatment and suffering of people with a disability in the form of Jay’s scrapbook entries, alongside the fictionalised chapters. How did these add to or change your perspective on Jay’s story?
9. What do you make of Jay’s relationship with Marc? How does this story arc add to the development of Jay’s character?
10. At the end of the novel, Jay meets an elderly Frank but Teddy is not mentioned. What do you think happened to Teddy, and what do you think we need to do as a society to make sure people like him have a future?



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Born in Brisbane, Al Campbell is a mother and full-time carer. Long ago she studied a bit, acted a bit, and pulled a lot of beers. Her first-ever publication was in *Overland* in 2020, followed by a story in *Signs of Life – an anthology*. *The Keepers* all but begged her to write it, given it is about issues – and people – that matter to her more than anything.

