



## **Beneath a Burning Sky: A gripping mystery and a beautiful love story that ticks all the boxes**

*Jenny Ashcroft*

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**'Exotic and mysterious - I was gripped by this complex tale'**

**Dinah Jefferies, author of number one bestselling *The Tea Planter's Wife***

*A beautiful and heart-wrenching story of love and betrayal, set against a backdrop of British-occupied Egypt. Perfect for fans of Victoria Hislop, Dinah Jefferies and Leah Fleming.*

When twenty-two-year-old Olivia is coerced into marriage by the cruel Alistair Sheldon she leaves England for Egypt, his home and the land of her own childhood. Reluctant as she is to go with Alistair, it's in her new home that she finds happiness in surprising places: she is reunited with her long-estranged sister, Clara, and falls - impossibly and illicitly - in love with her husband's boarder, Captain Edward Bertram.

Then Clara is abducted from one of the busiest streets in the city. Olivia is told it's thieves after ransom money, but she's convinced there's more to it. As she sets out to discover what's happened to the sister she's only just begun to know, she falls deeper into the shadowy underworld of Alexandria, putting her own life, and her chance at a future with Edward, the only man she's ever loved, at risk. Because, determined as Olivia is to find Clara, there are others who will stop at nothing to conceal what's become of her . . .

***Beneath a Burning Sky is a novel of secrets, betrayal and, above all else, love. Set against the heat and intrigue of colonial Alexandria, this beautiful and heart-wrenching story will take your breath away.***

## **Beneath a Burning Sky: A gripping mystery and a beautiful love story that ticks all the boxes Details**

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**story that ticks all the boxes Jenny Ashcroft**

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## **From Reader Review Beneath a Burning Sky: A gripping mystery and a beautiful love story that ticks all the boxes for online ebook**

### **Michael Cayley says**

This is a melodramatic story set in Egypt under British rule at the end of the 19th century. Olivia, trapped in a marriage not of her choosing to a cruel man, Alistair, rediscovers the sister, Clara, from whom she was separated in childhood following the death of their parents. And then Clara disappears, leading to an ineffectual police investigation and twist after twist in the plot. My problems with the book started early on, when I found the circumstances in which the sisters were separated, and in which Olivia was forced into a marriage she did not want, totally implausible. Some of the twists in the plot added further implausibilities. A love interest - between Olivia and Edward, who is lodging in her and Alistair's house - is thrown in, but seems rather tacked on. I thought much of the characterisation was unsubtle. For me, the best aspect of the novel was the depiction of the Egyptian milieu of the period, ranging from the British ruling class to bedouin and peasants.

With thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for letting me have an ARC.

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### **Christina ~ Brunette Reader says**

Back to Alexandria as a married woman after many years, Olivia encounters again the beloved sister she left behind as a little girl, and while the renewed relationship with Clara represents a glimmer of light in a desolating new life, the cruelty of the abusive husband who was imposed on her right before sailing from England is destroying any hope she might have harboured for a better future. Then the chance at happiness unexpectedly comes along with Captain Edward Bertram, but the clandestine feelings they develop seem to be destined to remain only an unattainable dream. And when Clara goes missing, the veil of duplicity enveloping Olivia's household, as well as all the interactions among her husband's circles, starts to break, revealing far more terrible truths that she could have first imagined.

Set in 1890s Egypt, *Beneath a Burning Sky* is a highly atmospheric novel about love and betrayal, a very carefully built Historical Fiction which is neither fully a mystery nor a romance, but with a gripping case of disappearance and a thwarted love story at its core nonetheless.

Capturing the mood, the colours and sounds of the fascinating setting through rich and vivid descriptions and a smooth prose, Jenny Ashcroft introduces us into a story fraught with tension and shadows. From letting the layered plot unravel against the backdrop of the ambivalent relationship between the European expatriate society and the locals to portraying each character with focus, the narration unfolds at a nice pace throughout the book and all the different threads deftly emerge and recede together with the alternating multiple point of views giving back a choral interpretation on the events, while the main storyline follows Olivia as she struggles to come to terms with her no way out situation.

She and Edward tiptoe around each other. They have flaws and fears, and they are well aware of the insurmountable scandal that may ensue should they surrender to their emotions, but the tragedy of her sister's abduction propels a cascade of circumstances that will have them rethink choices as much as the people around them, from Clara's fragility and hidden unhappiness to Olivia's own husband, whose elusive and mercurial personality makes him an even more disquieting villain.

The only drawback I can point out, a smaller one, is that I thought the dialogues often had a too contemporary feel to them to convincingly ring as Victorian-sounding, but luckily not to the point to really detract anything major from my overall enjoyment of this evocative and engrossing novel, which strikes the right balance of angst, introspection and action, while the plot steadily builds pathos leading to the dramatic conclusion.

A new to me author, I was very positively impressed as a whole and will surely consider reading other books by Ms. Ashcroft.

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### **Dash fan says**

5? Enchanting, Captivating, Page turner, Full of Mystery and Charm!

A beautiful first debut novel for Jenny Ashcroft.

Beneath a Burning Sky is a beautifully written story about love, romance, mystery, passion, secrets, intrigue its a beautiful historical fiction.

Beneath a Burning Sky is set in Egypt.

Egypt is one of my bucket list places to visit. So much rich history and character.

Jenny did not let me down on the descriptive encounters of Egypt and its beautiful surroundings. I literally felt like I was in Egypt.

The characters were passionate and strong.

Olivia the main character was a very strong female lead. Watching her grow as a character was lovely to watch. She has been through so much heartache and abuse from her husband Alistair, she still manages to keep strong no matter how much he grinds her down.

So when Edward shows her some attention the sparks shine between them. He is everything her husband isn't. He's kind, caring, romantic. Watching the relationship between Olivia and Edward is special. He is her forbidden fruit. But also her hero!

Olivia and her sister Clara were separated from each other after the death of their parents. Their awful nasty grandmother kept them apart and made sure they never found each other. Until now!

So when Olivia finally finds Clara she is about to lose her again.

When her sister mysteriously disappears things just don't add up.

So she sets out to try and uncover what has happened.

Edward help Olivia to find Clara in what appears to be a race against time. Putting both girls in danger.

There is plenty of twists, turns, suspense, mystery, romance, secrets to keep you page turning till the early hours.

I enjoy reading historical fiction, but Jenny made the pages light up and transport the reader right into the heart of Egypt. It's a fast paced read and it certainly wasn't what I was expecting it was much better.

I'm looking forward to reading more from Jenny! I certainly think she is going to be an Author to watch out

for!

I received this book from the Publisher in exchange for a honest and fair review via Netgalley.

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### **Rachel Burton says**

Every once in a while a book comes along that is so good you wonder how you will ever read anything else again. You question the quality of your own books. You get shivers every time you think about it. You can't drag yourself out of that world. You are good for nothing until you finish it. This is one of those books.

Jenny Ashcroft writes exquisitely, evoking every possible emotion and transporting you to late Victorian Egypt. This is so much more than historical fiction though; there's mystery, adventure, harsh brutality and ultimately love - oh the things we do for love.

The characters will stay with you long after the last page - I wanted to kill Alistair, shake Jeremy, be best friends forever with Olivia. And then there's Edward. From the first moment he walked on to the page I was undone. Jenny, I think you've created the greatest Romantic hero of all time - it's certainly made me up my writing game!

This book broke me, in the best possible way. When I finished I was bereft. All I wanted to do was turn to page one and start again.

Five stars is not enough.

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### **Helen says**

[http://greatreadsandtealeaves.blogspot...](http://greatreadsandtealeaves.blogspot.com/2013/08/review-beneath-burning-sky.html)

"Beneath a Burning Sky" is Jenny Ashcroft's debut novel, and what a debut it was! Initially I was interested in this book because it takes place in Egypt and I love to learn about this ancient place - fact or fiction. This story was set mostly in Alexandria during the end of the 19th century, when Egypt was still under British rule. Not really knowing what to expect from a debut, I was transported to another place and time in this beautifully written tale.

Jenny Ashcroft has written a wonderful story, a fabulous historical romance in colonial Egypt, one that is full of intrigue and mystery, love and hate. There is an interwoven plot that will keep you guessing right to the very end. There are wonderful descriptions of Egypt at the turn of the century, but this book is really all about the characters and their relationships. This is most definitely the driving force - the life of an expat during the 1890s.

There are many characters and each have their contributions to make. From the disappearance of the main character's sister - who did it? How? Why? Where? - to the brutality of a violent marriage (you will really despise Alistair). But at the heart of this tale is a love story and what a classic it is. Edward is the personification of the dashing hero and his relationship with Olivia will most certainly pull at your heartstrings.

‘I’m trying to keep you safe.’ His soft voice was baffled. ‘You cannot know the dangers of this land, the things people do.’

The flip story of Nailah, whilst a little difficult to follow at times, helps provide the voice of the Egyptians, demonstrating the contrast between the ruling British and the downtrodden Egyptians. However, this is such a well crafted mystery that at the end, when all the puzzle pieces start to come together, you will understand more and more her role and those of her family and friends.

Jenny Ashcroft is to be congratulated on how easily, and seemingly effortlessly, she brings to life the tense atmosphere of colonial rule. She evokes such a range of emotions through her characters that their stories will stay with you long after the final page is turned. It’s fast paced and addictive with characters that will grow on you - you will want to despise Alistair, slap Jeremy, swoon over Edward and rally behind Olivia - just to name a few.

Life wasn’t long enough to waste with unhappy decisions.

Am I gushing? Yes I am - it was absolutely brilliant. Whether or not historical fiction is your thing it doesn’t matter for this is so much more than that. The harsh brutality of life at times, the intriguing mystery and the quest for true love will sweep you away to a time and place long gone.

For lies were all she had to give. The truth, always terrifying, had never felt more impossible than now,

This review is based on a complimentary copy from the publisher and provided through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. The quoted material may have changed in the final release

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### **Pouting Always says**

Olivia's grandmother and her now husband Alistair conspired together to manipulate Olivia into marrying Alistair. Alistair's had originally coveted Olivia's sister, Clara, who ended up marrying his business partner. Though living with Alistair's daily abuse is draining, Olivia relishes being reunited with her sister Clara, whom she hasn't seen since they were children. Clara who is also living in Egypt sees Olivia often and tries to remind her of their childhood in Egypt, before their parents had died. Meanwhile Captain Edward has come to stay at Olivia's house as Alistair's guest and he and Olivia soon find themselves growing closer. Things only grow more complicated when Clara is abducted while out with Olivia and no one can seem to locate her.

I know I've said this before but I'm not the most familiar with history so like if things are historically inaccurate I'm probably not going to notice unless its something glaring like a woolly mammoth running around Victorian times though I mean maybe that's the plot of the book in which case whatever. I didn't think anything stuck out as such in the book historically. I liked the characters and I especially sympathized with Olivia whose life seemed totally unnecessarily hard. The romance between her and Edward was built up to which was nice because even though they were attracted to one another instantly things like trust should come with time, they don't just appear.

The mystery itself was interesting as well, and again I didn't see the ending coming, I might just be oblivious and that's why when I read this books I always end up going what the heck but yeah. I thought the whole underlying tension between the Egyptians and the British was portrayed really well as well, and worked really well as a theme in the book. All in all a solid book with romance, mystery, and politics mixed in together.

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### **Drew Irons says**

The missus said I should read this book. I judged it by its cover thinking it wasn't really my kind of thing. But, oh my, what a book! The writing is incredible and the pace is addictive but it's the characters that really pull you in. When was the last time you read a book and the characters stayed with you for weeks afterwards? Even the characters you're meant to hate, you still want to hit them long after they are out of your life. Olivia is a wonderful leading character, feisty and independent yet vulnerable. It's safe to say I fell in love a little. Read it, you'll love it and the next time you're asked how you are, don't be surprised if you just keep telling everyone you're 'Top Drawer'!

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### **Andrea says**

I have been immersed in this fabulous story of mystery, intrigue and romance. I can thoroughly recommend this book. I felt like I was there in 1891 Alexandria watching the story unfold. Excellent!

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### **Louise says**

Beautifully written novel, full of adventure, mystery, romance and intrigue. I was swept up in this story, fittingly set in the sweltering and oppressive heat of late 19th century Egypt. I was rooting for the protagonist Olivia, and found this novel hard to put down. I'll be looking out for Jenny Ashcroft's next novel, it will be interesting to see what she comes up with next. Highly recommended if you like history, romance and mystery.

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### **Lena says**

Radnja razvucena, na momente bas dosadna.

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### **Kerry Fisher says**

There's so much packed into this book. The sensuous descriptions of Egypt and what it was like to live there as an expat in the 1890s. The brutality of a marriage - God, how I hated Alistair and wished curses upon him. The who/how/what of Clara's disappearance. And that love story. My, what a love story. Edward is possibly the most charming romantic hero I've come across in fiction. I kept wanting to cheer every time he came into the story. I loved Olivia - the gorgeous feistiness of a woman who should have been constrained by the era

she was born in...but yet...I applauded her inner dialogue.

Absolutely brilliant. Whether or not historical fiction is your thing - this twisty-turny love story transcends era and genre. Highly recommended.

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### **Pauline says**

I enjoyed *Beneath a Burning Sky* by Jenny Ashcroft. This was a romantic story with plenty of mystery and suspense, set in Egypt in the late 1800s.

I would like to thank NetGalley and the publisher for my e-copy in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Jules says**

Although I read this to the end and enjoyed parts of the story, it wasn't really what I was expecting. I went into it thinking I was going to experience atmospheric historical fiction, but it felt more like a dramatic romance with love, lies and revenge.

Having been to Egypt twice many years ago, I was attracted to this book by its location. Unfortunately I didn't feel this book brought Egypt to life with the intensity I'd hoped. It lacked the magic of exotic surroundings I was hoping for.

I did like that there was a Hassan in the book, as I met a Hassan the first time I went to Egypt in 1996 and we have remained friends. We wrote letters to each other for years and are still occasionally in touch with each other through Facebook.

In my opinion, if you like drama and romance you'll probably enjoy this more than if you're choosing to read this because of your love of historical fiction or Egypt.

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### **Laura says**

Book reviews on [www.snazybooks.com](http://www.snazybooks.com)

*Beneath a Burning Sky* is set in British occupied Egypt towards the end of the 19th century, and this country is a place I'd love to visit. I was excited to read about Alexandria during such an interesting time politically. One thing I discovered as I read on, however, is that the book is definitely more of a love story mixed with a touch of mystery and drama, rather than all about the country at that time. Obviously you get a sense of time and place from Jenny Ashcroft's lovely writing, but it is far more about the characters' relationships and feelings, which is to be expected really – it is billed as a “heart-wrenching story of love and betrayal”.

The characters are interesting in their own ways – some are distinctly unlikable, some seem like horrible human beings, and some you actually care about which made me want to read on. I felt that the storyline with Nailah was a little less engaging, and I grew impatient with wanting to get back to Olivia and Clara's world, though I enjoyed seeing a different perspective to the story and one that didn't centre around rich, indulgent British people. Some of the people in this world of 'British rule' were really annoying, and this effectively painted a picture of how many locals must have seen the British expats.

The descriptions are vivid and interesting with some lovely imagery, though I felt some parts could have been cut down a little, finding my interest starting to wane at some points. I suppose I just hoped for a bit more about the place itself, as well as the character information – sometimes the story didn't grab me as much as I wanted it to. It's still worth a read though, especially if you like your historical fiction with plenty of drama and an element of mystery.

\* Many thanks to Sphere for providing a copy of this novel on which I chose to write an honest and unbiased review.\*

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### **Agi says**

"Beneath a Burning Sky" is Jenny Ashcroft's debut novel, and boy, what a great debut it was! Gently and beautifully written, full of mysteries, romances, love, hate and intrigue, with characters that you are rooting for, mixing historical fiction, romance and mystery. It is full of hidden passion and intrigues and it truly surprised me in a very positive way - I'll be honest, I haven't expected it to be so good.

The characters are better than good. You love them or you hate to love them, but even those that you hate, you can't stop thinking about them. There are many of them, to be honest, and I had some problems with recognizing and distinguishing them, especially the Egyptian protagonists. There was also the sub - plot of Nailah and her family and to be honest it was this tad difficult to understand what her role in the story was - that is, till almost the very end but it was a little too late then. However, this in a great way showed the difference between the British class and the local people. Olivia is a great leading character - she is, as it usually happens, much ahead of her times, she's independent and feisty but there is also a lot vulnerability in her character. She really grows throughout the story. She changes and develops and it was great to see how much determination there is in her and how brave she faces all the challenges - and there were plenty of them. Alistair - well, I hated him, but I think you were supposed to hate him. Edward is a total contrast to Alistair - romantic, lovely, and charming gentleman and I couldn't wait for more scenes with him. The forbidden romance was written in a very interesting way, and you can't help but fell for both of the characters - for the heroine because you just felt sorry her and for the hero because he's just so lovely and you keep everything crossed for them and hope for a happy ending - but will it come?

This story was full to the brims with events and happenings. The setting was unusual for me - I think I've never before read a book set in Egypt in 1890s, but it only made the reading more exciting and interesting for me. The mystery of Clara's missing, the who, and why, and when, and what happened was seamlessly flowing and was really intriguing. And of course the romance, or should I say, the love story - it was just brilliant. Yes, I had some troubles with getting into the book, it took me some time to get used to the writing style, the inner dialogues and the descriptions, and some of the characters were too clichéd and stereotyped, but then it just made click and I couldn't put the book down. Also, there were moments that I'd love a little bit deeper info, for example about Olivia's parents and is it only me or did you also miss the explanation why Millicent hated Olivia so much? But the author has so easily and effortlessly brought the atmosphere of those time, and the descriptions were so vivid, bringing everything to life. There were many twists in this story, and most of them were really unexpected, and I just wanted to turn the next page and see what's going to happen. The plot was complex but I've actually never felt confused - it was logical and everything had its place. The story slowly and steadily unpeels the many layers and uncovers various secrets and all the pieces of the puzzle come together in the end.

So altogether, "Beneath a Burning Sky" was historical fiction at its finest. This was a brilliant, addictive, fast - paced read with characters that really grows on you. The author has easily pulled me into her fictional world that will truly stay with me for a long time, and this is really a sign of a great book. I am already looking forward Jenny Ashcroft's next book and in the meantime I can only highly recommend this novel to you.

Copy provided by the publisher in return for an honest review.

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