



**Wife on the Run**  
Fiona Higgins



**P**aula is a good mother to her two teenage children, but in the eyes of her husband, Hamish, she lacks wifely qualities. As well as being a social worker at an aged-care facility in Melbourne, she dominates the home and prides herself that everything is going smoothly – until their daughter is exposed in a false sex scandal on Facebook, and she finds out that Hamish is supposedly having e-sex with a teenage girl. Her reaction is dramatic: she takes the children and her father, Syd, on a round-Australia trip in Syd's caravan, leaving Hamish hankering to follow her when he finally finds out where she's gone.

This racy read is filled with realistic characters and the kind of relationship issues that a lot of readers would identify with. It's easy to relate to Paula as she attempts to run from her problems. But her life grows more interesting and complicated when a handsome backpacker joins them on the road trip. Grandfather Syd seems like the only stable one, and he often becomes the glue that holds them all together. Meanwhile, Hamish chases them across the Nullarbor and up the West Australian coast, making catastrophic decisions on the way.

Fiona Higgins weaves a gripping tale around powerful themes: how social media can control and ruin lives, trust betrayed, and the lost expectations of children for happy families. It's an adrenaline-filled journey, and you may not be able to put the book down, even though I felt the ending was a bit too tidily contrived.

★★★★ Allen & Unwin \$29.99

Reviewed by Judith Grace



**About Fiona Higgins**

Fiona Higgins is an Australian author who explores intimate relationships and what lies beneath the veneer of normality that most people work hard to present to the world. Her stories focus on things that most people don't like to talk about.



**The Boston Girl**  
Anita Diamant

**S**uch is the skill of this book's author that at times the reader may forget the book is a novel and believe it to be autobiography. Anita Diamant, author of *The Red Tent*, uses the device of a 22-year-old woman asking her 85-year-old grandmother how she became the woman she is – and that's how the story starts.

Set in Boston, it portrays the life of a girl born in 1900 to European Jewish immigrants. The couple and their daughters live in a one-room tenement, but Addie, the narrator, is often in conflict with her mother and father because they are suspicious of modern American life.

As well as telling Addie's story, the novel provides a glimpse into Jewish immigrant life in pre-World War I Boston and the lives led by teenage girls, whether they were Jewish, Italian or Irish.

People from these different ethnic groups come together at a settlement house in Rockport, north of Boston (where there is a library) and at a holiday lodge. The lodge plays an important role in Addie's life, along with the lifelong friendships she makes there.

The story does not shy away from the details of the children's deaths in the flu pandemic of 1918, home-administered abortions and a beloved sister's death. Addie carves out a career, as do her friends from her multicultural neighbourhood, showing their immigrant parents just what could be achieved in the US.

In addition to novels, Diamant has also written non-fiction guides to contemporary Jewish life, and this novel illustrates the depth of her research and her knowledge of early 20th-century Boston.

★★★★ RG Simon & Schuster \$29.99

Reviewed by Jennifer Somerville

