

JUSTINE LARBALESTIER

RAZOR

HURST





## SURRY HILLS 1930s

In the vein of *The Diviners* and  
*The Petal and the White*,  
*Razorhurst* reimagines the notorious  
history of a mob-controlled Sydney.

"Vivid and bloody and bold and fast—  
I feel like *Razorhurst* is in my bones now."

—#1 *New York Times* bestselling author Elizabeth Gilbert

"A bloody and evocative novel."

—*Sydney Morning Herald*; Pick of the Week



- 1. Pin Stores
- 2. The Dango
- 3. Old Man O'Brady's
- 4. Gloriana Nelson's
- 5. Train Lines

CENTRAL STATION

CITY

## RAZORHURST

March 2015 • Historical Paranormal Thriller

Sydney's deadly Razorhurst neighborhood, 1932. Gloriana Nelson and Mr. Davidson, two ruthless mob bosses, have reached a fragile peace—one maintained by "razor men." Kelpie, orphaned and living on the street, is blessed and cursed with the ability to see Razorhurst's many ghosts, and she sees the cracks already forming in their truce. Then Kelpie meets Dymphna Campbell.

Dymphna is a legendary beauty and prized moll of Gloriana Nelson. She's earned the nickname "Angel of Death" for the trail of beaus who have died trying to protect her from Mr. Davidson's advances. Unbeknownst to Kelpie, Dymphna can see ghosts, too, and as Gloriana's hold crumbles one burly henchman at a time, the girls will need each other more than ever.

As loyalties shift and betrayal threatens at every turn, Dymphna is determined to not only survive, but to rise to the top with Kelpie at her side.

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## About Justine Larbalestier



Justine Larbalestier is an Australian-American writer who was born and raised in Sydney. Her last solo novel, *Liar*, received four starred reviews, was shortlisted for eleven awards and won four, and was a best book of the year for the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), School Library Journal, Bank Street Books, Michigan Thumbs Up, as well as the International Youth Library's The White Ravens 2010. She also wrote *How to Ditch Your Fairy* and the *Magic or Madness* trilogy as well as co-editing the anthology *Zombies vs. Unicorns* anthology with Holly Black. Justine lives in Sydney, Australia where she gardens, boxes, and tweets far too much. Visit her on Twitter @JustineLavaworm and at her website, justinelarbalestier.com.

### From Justine

I wrote *Razorhurst* because I moved to the inner-city Sydney neighbourhood of Surry Hills in late 2005. I fell hopelessly in love. It's a beautiful area full of narrow lanes, grand old pubs, terrace houses, warehouses—it still has a garment district, though it's not what it once was. There are multi-million dollar flats along side public housing. The cashed-up newer residents have yet to drive out the older, poorer residents. There are still students and writers and newly arrived immigrants getting by living in shared accommodation.

I wrote *Razorhurst* because Surry Hills is full of ghosts. In the 1920s and 1930s the whole area was overrun with gangs wielding cut-throat razors. Reading a non-fiction account of the time I discovered that a battle between police and razor men had happened around the corner from where I now live, that the mobster boss, Kate Leigh, used to live a few streets over, that there had once been as many sly grog shops (speakeasies) as there are now hairdressers.

I began to speculate about which buildings would have been around back then, to take note of the faded outlines of old advertisements painted on their sides. I began to see the ghosts of the real-life characters, such as Kate Leigh and her rival Tilly Devine, who had once ruled here. I began to hear Tilly and Kate's raucous laughter whenever I walked those streets. In homage to those two remarkable and terrifying women I created Gloriana Nelson.

But those ghosts were shadowy and indistinct, not much more than their laughter, until I came across two collections of Sydney Police photos from 1912-1960: *City of Shadows* and *Crooks Like Us*. These photos of criminals, victims, missing persons, suspects and crime scenes are extraordinarily vivid black and white pictures. Now I knew the scars and lines and blemishes on my ghosts' faces, the shapes of their eyes. I knew what the rooms and flats and houses they lived in looked like inside as well as out. My ghosts were turning into characters.

I found myself writing *Razorhurst*. But some of those ghosts resisted that transformation; they remained ghosts. Instead of panicking I embraced it. I've always wanted to write a ghost story and with *Razorhurst* I finally got my chance.

# From RAZORHURST

Nineteen twenty-eight had been a banner year for blood. Throughout the east of the city, Surry Hills, Darlinghurst, Woolloomooloo, Kings Cross, Paddington, blood flowed. Razors cut up faces, sliced off ears, opened up chests and bowels; went in through the eye, the ribs, the throat. They maimed, crippled, and killed.

Why razors? Because they banned handguns at the beginning of the twenties, didn't they? To keep them out of the hands of the Commies. To stop the much-promised revolution. The one that never came. Not that banning guns made them go away, but it did mean if you was caught with one, they could arrest you without you even pulling the trigger. Catch you with a razor, and all you had to do was point to your none-too-smooth cheeks: Was gunna give meself a shave first thing, wasn't I, constable? A very close shave. That's why it's so sharp, see?

The razor men became artists of the blade. Where was the artistry in squeezing a trigger? In the rough outlines of a bullet wound? Nowhere. Not like the L you could carve on a man's face. You didn't have to kill your enemies. Just let them know you'd been there and weren't never going away. That scar lived on a mug's face for the rest of his life. He would always be marked, broken, less than. Or not.

The hardest razor men had the biggest scars. Get cut up like that? And live? Now there was a man. Angry Carbone, Snowy Fullerton, Razor Tom, Jimmy Palmer, Bluey Denham. Real men with real scars and real razors. Proud inhabitants of Greater Razorhurst. Dubbed so by *Truth*, a newspaper that never lied, in the bloody year of 1920, when Frog Hollow had only just been torn down, Old Ma was barely dead, and Kelpie was being raised by ghosts. Dymphna Campbell was beginning her first year in her chosen profession, and those gang bosses, Gloriana Nelson and Mr. Davidson, were crawling to the top of the bloody remains of Razorhurst and brokering the peace that still held.

And could well hold for a while longer on this cold winter morning in 1932.

Or not . . .

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