

# The Day She Cradled Me

‘The judgement of the Court is that you, Minnie Dean, be taken from the place where you now are to the prison from whence you came, thence to the place of execution, and that there, in the manner and form by law appointed, you be hanged by the neck *until you are dead.*’

Nelson-based writer Sacha de Bazin was barely aware of the story of the infamous Minnie Dean —the only New Zealand woman ever to be hanged, and a legendary figure in Southland — until she watched Marcus Lush talking about her during his TV series *Off The Rails*. Her interest was piqued, and she began searching for as much information as she could find about the so-called Winton Baby Farmer, who in the mid 1890s was accused of murdering children in her care and disposing of their bodies. After reading Lynley Hood’s biography of Dean, and discovering Dean’s own account of her life, de Bazin was seized by the need to write about her.

“I realised that Minnie’s story needed to be retold, as there was the distinct possibility she was innocent of murdering the babies,” de Bazin says. “Minnie’s last wish before they hanged her was for the public to read her side of the story, so that is what I set about to do — to give her a voice. I thought that if I wrote a novel for my friends and family then there would be at least some people who might think of her differently.”

This then is the background to de Bazin’s fascinating, gripping debut novel, *The Day She Cradled Me*. Partly told by the Reverend Lindsay, in whom Dean confided as she awaited her trial and then sentencing, and partly narrated by Dean herself, the novel traverses Minnie’s oppressive upbringing in Victorian Scotland to adulthood in Southland, where she battles her own nature and the hardships of colonial life. Once Minnie is tried, she has to face her impending execution, while the Reverend Lindsay, who has become her unlikely ally, fights to prevent her paying the ultimate price for society’s sins.

Terrifically written, and exhaustively researched, *The Day She Cradled Me* is a powerful novel which vividly evokes the times and the complexities of the case. It also tells a compelling human story, one that shows Minnie Dean as a real person caught up in the social hypocrisies of the era, rather than as a monster, as she is so often portrayed.



**Sacha de Bazin** is a Nelson based mother of 5 children, who range in ages from 13 down to 3. Previously she was a primary school teacher, with a BA in English. She grew up in Tokoroa, studied in Auckland, raised children in Canterbury, and recently moved to Nelson. This is her first novel.



## The Day She Cradled Me

Author: Sacha de Bazin

Format & Price: Trade paperback, \$37.99

E-book, \$37.99

Imprint: Black Swan

Publication Date: 2/3/2012



RANDOM HOUSE  
NEW ZEALAND

To arrange an interview, extract or for more information, please contact:  
Yvonne Thynne, Random House New Zealand  
E: [ythynne@randomhouse.co.nz](mailto:ythynne@randomhouse.co.nz); t: (09) 984 6173