



[Love objects]

By *Emily Maguire*

First published in 2021

Genre and Subject

Australian fiction

Families -- Fiction

Interpersonal relations -- Fiction

Domestic fiction

Synopsis

A stunning, simply told story of great compassion and insight, from the author of the Stella Prize-shortlisted *An Isolated Incident*. Nic is a forty-five-year-old trivia buff, amateur nail artist and fairy godmother to the neighbourhood's stray cats. She's also the owner of a decade's worth of daily newspapers, enough clothes and shoes to fill Big W three times over and a pen collection which, if laid end-to-end, would probably circle her house twice. She'd put her theory to the test, if only the pen buckets weren't currently blocked in by the crates of Happy Meal toys and the towers of Vegemite jars, take-away containers and cat food tins.

Nic's closest relationship is with her niece Lena. The two of them meet for lunch every Sunday to gossip about the rest of the family and bitch about work (they're both checkout chicks: Lena just for now, Nic until they prise her staff discount card from her cold, dead hands).

One Sunday, Nic fails to turn up to lunch and when Lena calls she gets a disconnection message. Arriving at the house she hasn't visited in years ('Too far for you to come, hon. Let's meet in the middle.') she finds her aunt unconscious under an avalanche of stuff.

Lena is devastated that her beloved aunt has been living in such squalor all this time. While Nic is in hospital, she gets to work cleaning things up for her. Her first impulse is to call in the bulldozers and start searching Gumtree for a roomy caravan. But with the help of her reluctantly recruited brother, Will, she gets the job done.

This heroic effort is not appreciated by the plastered up, crutch-wielding Nic. She returns to an empty, alien place unrecognisable as her home and the unbearable pity of her family who have no idea what they've destroyed. How can she live in this place without safety and peace? And how can she ever forgive the niece who has betrayed her?

Author Biography

Emily Maguire is the author of six novels, including the Stella Prize and Miles Franklin Award-shortlisted *An Isolated Incident*, and three non-fiction books. Her articles and essays on sex, feminism, culture and literature have been published widely including in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian*, *The Observer* and *The Age*. Emily works as a teacher and as a mentor to young and emerging writers and was the 2018/2019 Writer-in-Residence at the Charles Perkins Centre at the University of Sydney.

Discussion Starters

1. What was your favourite part of the book?
2. What was your least favourite?
3. Did you race to the end, or was it more of a slow burn?
4. What did you think of the writing? What passages strike you as insightful, even profound? Perhaps a bit of dialog that's funny or poignant or that encapsulates a character? Maybe there's a particular comment that states the book's thematic concerns?
5. How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to "get into it"? How did you feel reading it—amused, sad, disturbed, confused, bored...?
6. Describe the main characters—personality traits, motivations, and inner qualities.
 - Why do characters do what they do?
 - Are their actions justified?
 - Describe the dynamics between characters (in a marriage, family, or friendship).
 - How has the past shaped their lives?
 - Do you admire or disapprove of them?
 - Do they remind you of people you know?
7. Are the main characters dynamic—changing or maturing by the end of the book? Do they learn about themselves, how the world works and their role in it?
8. What surprised you most about the book?
9. How did your opinion of the book change as you read it?
10. Has this novel changed you—broadened your perspective? Have you learned something new or been exposed to different ideas about people or a certain part of the world? Do you think you'll remember it in a few months or years?
11. If you could ask the author a question, what would you ask? Have you read other books by the same author? If so how does this book compare. If not, does this book inspire you to read others? How does the book's title work in relation to the book's contents? If you could give the book a new title, what would it be?
12. Is this book overrated or underrated?
13. Did this book remind you of any other books?
14. Would you ever consider re-reading it? Why or why not?
15. Are there lingering questions from the book you're still thinking about?
16. Did the book strike you as original?
17. Is the ending satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?

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