



[This has been absolutely lovely]

By Jessica Dettmann

First published in 2021

Genre and Subject

Families -- Fiction

Australian fiction

Domestic fiction

Synopsis

Family is forever, and there's nothing you can do about it. Dettmann nails the funny, sad and bizarre nuances of family life in this gripping novel. Molly's a millennial home organiser about to have her first baby. Obviously her mum, Annie, will help with the childcare. Everyone else's parents are doing it. But Annie's dreams of music stardom have been on hold for thirty-five years, paused by childbirth then buried under her responsibilities as a mother, wage earner, wife, and only child of ailing parents. Finally, she can taste freedom. As Molly and her siblings gather in the close quarters of the family home over one fraught summer, shocking revelations come to light. Everyone is forced to confront the question of what it means to be a family.

Author Biography

Dettmann worked as an editor for Random House Australia and HarperCollins Publishers Australia before becoming a writer.

In late 2018 her debut novel *How to Be Second Best* was published through HarperCollins, drawing comparisons to Liane Moriarty and Marian Keyes. The novel was endorsed by both Mia Freedman and Ben Elton, who labelled Dettmann "a fine comic writer". The Daily Telegraph called it "the first book you have to read in the new year".

In 2019 the Telegraph tipped her as "Australia's next Liane Moriarty".

Dettmann has regularly performed her work at Giant Dwarf's Story Club. In July 2016 she performed 'The Chairs Are Gone'. In October 2018 she performed 'Yuletide MacGyver'.

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 the ending satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?

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- *The other side of beautiful* by *Kim Lock*