Dating Big Bird

by Laura Zigman



About the Book

With the laugh-out-loud humor and heartfelt wisdom that made **Animal Husbandry** a national bestseller, Laura Zigman's second novel introduces Ellen Franck, a successful single career woman whose one desire--a child of her own--throws her into the ever-growing ranks of the "reproductively challenged."

Ellen has a life many people dream about--a glamorous fashion industry job, an apartment in Greenwich Village, good friends--and yet Ellen feels herself at sixes and sevens, filled with a vague longing for...what? She can't say. Then the sight of her newborn niece, Nicole (a.k.a. "The Pickle"), makes her realize exactly what she's been missing: a child. But there's one problem. Malcolm, the man she loves, is too scarred by the long-ago death of his young son to ever consider fatherhood again.

Looking down the barrel of the dark side of thirty-five, Ellen knows that time is passing, and as it does, her desire to have a baby only increases--especially when her sister Lynn announces she's pregnant with her second child. Now Ellen must finally address the very real flaws in her relationship with Malcolm and examine her doubts and fears about the only option that seems to be available--single motherhood. And so begins nine months of reading, Internet surfing, and nonstop Zigmanesque observations about morning sickness, stretch marks, accelerated hair growth, digestion, amniocentesis (and that's just the beginning). And Ellen...well, Ellen finally makes a clear-eyed decision that will change her life.

Discussion Guide

1. Why does Ellen take so long to come to a decision about single motherhood? What are her biggest concerns?

2. What are the most important reasons that Ellen and Amy want to have children? How much of it has to do with what they want, as opposed to what society tells them they should be?

3. Will Ellen's decision to raise a baby on her own make her a more committed mother because she is overcoming additional obstacles?

4. What does Malcolm's pain and loss after his son's death tell us about the emotional price of parenthood?

5. Why does Ellen put up with Malcolm's inability to be intimate with her for so long? What is she getting out of the relationship instead?

6. How do Ellen and Amy's views of parenthood compare to your own? Do you relate to them or not?

7. Ellen makes assumptions about Karen's ability to be a good mother, based on Karen's personality and work routine. What does this say about Ellen's perceptions of motherhood?

8. Should Ellen find other things to fulfill her while she's trying to decide about becoming a mother--or does her research fill some of that void?

9. How do you think Amy's solution will turn out? What, in the long run, would make her happier--a baby within an ambiguous marriage, or a baby by herself?

10. What is it about Ellen's relationship with "The Pickle" (her niece Nicole) that is so satisfying? Is it because she isn't a mother herself that she feels so much for The Pickle--or not?

11. How do Ellen's reflections on motherhood affect her relationship with her own parents?

12. What is your opinion of "Mammo"? Does it apply to you? People you know? Do you wish it did? Would you wear it as a necklace?

Author Bio

Laura Zigman is the author of SMALL WORLD (a *New York Times* Group Text pick and Editor?s Choice), SEPARATION ANXIETY, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY (which was made into the movie *Someone Like You* starring Hugh Jackman, Ashley Judd), DATING BIRD, and PIECE OF WORK. She has collaborated on several works of fiction, including Eddie Izzard?s *New York Times* bestseller, BELIEVE ME; and has been a contributor to the *New York Times* and other publications. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her seventh and latest novel is THE AUTHOR WEEKEND.

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