Spectacular Things

by Beck Dorey-Stein



About the Book

Two sisters examine what they owe each other and what they are willing to sacrifice to make their dreams come true in this ?epic story? (Reese Witherspoon) from *New York Times* bestselling author Beck Dorey-Stein.

What would you give up for the person you love most? What would you expect in return?

Mia and Cricket have always been close. The gifted daughters of a young single mother, the ?Lowe girls? are well-known in the small Maine town they call home. Each sister has a role to fill. The responsible and academically minded Mia assumes the position of caregiver far too young, while Cricket, a bouncing ball of energy and talent, seems born for soccer stardom. But the cost of achieving athletic greatness comes at a steep price.

As Mia and Cricket grow up, they must grapple with the legacy of their mother?s secret past while navigating their own precarious future. Can Mia allow herself to fall in love at the risk of repeating a terrible history? Will Cricket?s relentless chase of a lifelong goal drive her sister away? When does loyalty become self-sabotage?

A sharply observed and tender portrait of sisters, love and ambition, SPECTACULAR THINGS is a sweeping story about the impossible choices we?re forced to make in pursuit of our dreams.

Discussion Guide

1. SPECTACULAR THINGS is a novel about the tangled knot between ambition, wild dreams and sisterhood that asks *What would you give up for the person you love most? What would you expect in return?* What did you think about Mia?s request that Cricket compromise her soccer career to donate a kidney to her sister? Would you have immediately said yes? Why or why not?

2. Liz was a very young mother who sacrificed so much for her daughters. In what ways did her sacrifices shape her daughters? futures? How did she influence Mia?s and Cricket?s individual ambitions and aspirations?

3. At several points in the novel, a character?s individual ambition must take a backseat to her family?s bigger needs. What did you think about the compromises Liz, Mia and Cricket all made for their family over the course of the book? Have you ever had to make similar compromises for family? What did that feel like?

4. Cricket develops a long and complicated friendship with Sloane. At times they are rivals, at other times they are one another?s fiercest supporters. What did you think of this friendship? In what ways was Sloane and Cricket?s relationship an example of another kind of sisterhood?

5. Mia?s relationship with Oliver is not without its own complications. Were you surprised by their relationship? In what ways were they perfect for one another? In what ways did falling in love also entail compromise for both of them?

6. Mia and Cricket grieve the death of their mother in different and complimentary ways. Have you ever faced a loss that was sudden the way Liz?s death was? How did your grief express itself? Was your experience similar to Mia?s or Cricket?s?

7. Liz always told her daughters, ?You?re a Lowe, not a quitter.? In what ways did that mantra expand --- and limit --- each sister?s sense of self? What role does soccer play in the novel? It means something different to Liz, Mia and Cricket. What does it represent for each of them?

8. By the end of the book, the Lowe sisters? love of soccer has been passed down to Betty. Did you think this was inevitable? What do you think it means to see this in a new generation?

9. Cricket always believed that *?To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift.?* How did her understanding of that quotation change over time? What did she come to learn was the true gift?

Author Bio

Beck Dorey-Stein grew up in Narberth, Pennsylvania, and taught high school English for three years before serving as a White House stenographer from 2012 to 2017. She is the author of the novels ROCK THE BOAT and SPECTACULAR THINGS, and the memoir FROM THE CORNER OF THE OVAL, which was a *New York Times* bestseller. She now lives in Maine.

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Publication Date: May 5, 2026
Genres: Fiction
Paperback: 384 pages
Publisher: Dial Press Trade Paperback
ISBN-10: 0593446305
ISBN-13: 9780593446300