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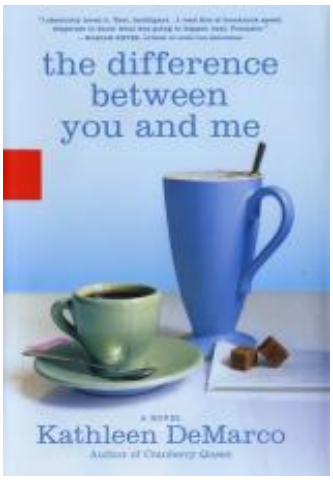
The Difference Between You and Me

by Kathleen DeMarco



About the Book

Josie O'Leary is a beautiful 28-year-old who is determined to assume her rightful place in the Hollywood pantheon, as president of a major movie studio. She is ruthless in plotting her ascent to the top, and nothing --- not her ailing husband, her rude boss, or even her complete ignorance of how movies are actually made --- will stop her. However, when Josie comes across a can't-miss screenplay, she recognizes that this is her big chance to become a producer. Not the kind of producer who works with writers or deals with boring details, but a producer who earns a seven-figure fee and has her name at the top of the credits --- someone who commands respect, who can get a call through to anyone instantly, and who reads about her own life in *Variety* and *Vanity* Fair.

Neurotic New Yorker Carla Trousse moves to L.A. after everything in her life (including her living room ceiling) collapses around her. Overeducated and underemployed, Carla has no idea what to do next; she suspects she has only one real talent, for criticizing. She also has a terrible habit of talking too much and is bound to say something that is either condescending or just plain rude. Fortunately, her critical nature comes in handy at her new job as a script reader, or development girl. She's the oldest "D-girl" in her office at the absolute bottom of the movie-industry food chain, yet for the first time in years, she feels a glimmer of optimism.

When Josie's script attracts the attention of Henry Antonelli, a legendary leading man and Hollywood powerhouse, a startling revelation results in an uneasy alliance between Josie and Carla. Mutual loathing turns to grudging respect, then real friendship, as the two women discover the limits of ambition and the endless rewards of human connection.

Discussion Guide

1. From the outset, we see that Josie and Carla are unhappy women who are looking for much more out of life than they currently have. Compare and contrast their personalities and the ways in which they cope with their struggles.

2. Josie hates displays of emotion and does her best to hide her feelings from others. She is a ruthless go-getter who will do whatever is necessary to get ahead in her career. Carla, on the other hand, suffers from a total lack of self-confidence; she has a habit of talking way too much and tends to say things that are inappropriate, condescending, or downright rude. What are your feelings about these two characters? Do you sympathize with either of them, and can you relate to their travails? Could you see yourself getting along with or befriending either of them?

3. While most people would be dumbfounded if they had the opportunity to rub elbows with a major celebrity, Josie behaves quite differently while in the company of Henry Antonelli. What is Josie's take on Henry and his fame, and do you think her initial encounters with him helped her gain the confidence she needed to pursue a career in Hollywood?

4. How does Carla react to Aunt Paulette's stunning revelation that Henry is Carla's father? What is Carla's opinion of having such a high-profile relative and the impact that this might have on her future? How do you think Josie would have reacted if she found out Henry was her father?

5. In Hollywood, Josie and Carla each want to make a name for themselves. What does "success" mean to each of them? How do their approaches to succeeding in the film industry differ, and how effective are they in their efforts?

6. Kathleen DeMarco has created a number of supporting characters who interact with Josie and Carla in one way or another, both in their personal and professional lives. Discuss how some of these characters help pave the way, either directly or indirectly, for Josie and Carla to pursue their dreams of fame and fortune. Who would you say is your favorite supporting character in the book, and why?

7. How do Josie's outlook on life and her attitude toward success change by the end of the novel? What impact do you think Carla had on Josie's remarkable transformation?

8. How has Carla's life changed at the conclusion of the novel with respect to her career and how she relates to others? Discuss the impact that both Josie and Henry had on her reversal of fortune.

9. What do you think the future holds for Josie and Carla in terms of their careers and their friendship? Will they be able to survive the cutthroat nature of Hollywood, and do you believe either of them will find true love in their lives?

10. The author has offered quite a revealing look at how business is conducted in Hollywood, where backstabbing, gossip and lies are an unfortunate reality. Before reading this book, what were your opinions of Hollywood, the film industry, and the influential people (both on- and off-camera) who make the big bucks year after year? Have your perceptions changed at all after reading about Josie and Carla's experiences? If so, how?

Author Bio

Kathleen DeMarco is a screenwriter and producing partner of John Leguizamo at Lower East Side Films. She attended the University of Pennsylvania and has written for HBO, NBC, ABC, and CBS. Kathleen grew up in New Jersey and holds the prestigious title of 1982 New Jersey Blueberry Queen. She lives in New York City.

Critical Praise

"I absolutely loved it. Taut, intelligent, ever-so-slightly-spiky in tone; I read this at breakneck pace, desperate to see what would happen next. I loved it."

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