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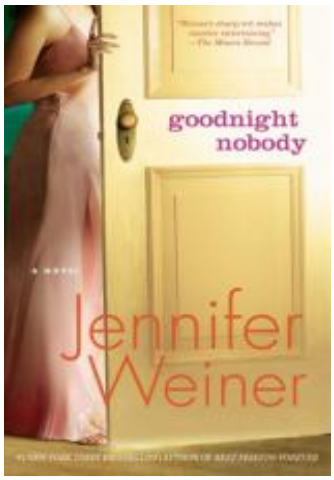
Goodnight Nobody

by Jennifer Weiner



About the Book

Life in suburban Upchurch is anything but picturesque for Kate Klein. Along with three small children and a husband who is hardly at home, Kate has to contend with living up to the standards set by her fellow Upchurch mothers. They're designer-clad, perfectly coiffed---at the playground---and feed their kids organic food. They make motherhood look effortless while Kate, with uncombed hair and a stash of bribe lollipops, "hasn't done one single thing right" since moving from Manhattan to this small Connecticut town.

When Kate arrives for lunch at the home of Kitty Cavanaugh and finds the Upchurch mom murdered, she's jolted from her malaise and sets out to uncover the killer. As her investigation heats up, Kate finds out not only that Kitty had a few dark secrets but that they had a mutual acquaintance---a man from Kate's past who will lead her to reexamine the life she's chosen.

In **Goodnight Nobody**, Jennifer Weiner brings together two compelling tales---an engrossing murder mystery and a poignant story about one woman's quest to save her sanity and sense of self amidst the challenges of motherhood, marriage, and suburbia.

Discussion Guide

1. Even when it becomes increasingly dangerous---a threatening note is left on her windshield, her neighbor Lexi Hagen-Holdt disappears---Kate continues her search for the truth. Discuss what compels Kate to get involved in solving Kitty's murder.

2. At the beginning of the story Kate remarks about Kitty, "As far as I was concerned she represented everything that was wrong with my new hometown" (5). Explain how Kate changes her opinion of Kitty as she learns more about her life. Why is Kate so surprised to find out that she and Kitty had a number of things in common?

3. To get Tara Singh to speak with her about Kitty, Kate tells her she's writing a thesis on women and "erasure" (159). Later, when Kate's father asks her if she's looking into Kitty's death she replies, "I'm actually more interested in her life. I'm trying to figure out who she used to be before Upchurch" (164). How do these two statements apply to Kate as well as to Kitty?

4. Kate feels as if she doesn't fit in with the other Upchurch mothers and that they routinely snub her. Yet Sukie later says to her, "You always thought you were the smart one. So smart! So sophisticated! So much better than us dim-bulb mama bears in boring old Connecticut, right?" (354). Using examples from the story to support your opinion, discuss whether Kate was right or wrong in her assumptions about the Upchurch mothers and how they treated her.

5. Ben constantly criticizes Kate, from the incident with the birthday party to his remark about running out of clean shirts to his suggestion that she join a gym. Why does Kate allow Ben to treat her this way? On their first date, Kate thinks, "He is a suitable man. We'll have a suitable life together" (176). Why did Kate choose to marry Ben, especially since there is an obvious lack of passion in their relationship?

6. From their first meeting in the offices of the *New York Review*, it's clear that Kate and Janie are, in many ways, opposites. What makes their friendship so strong? Why has it endured despite their leading remarkably different lifestyles, most notably with Kate in the suburbs and Janie single and living in the city?

7. The book includes flashbacks to important moments in Kate's life. How do these scenes set in the past provide you with a better sense of Kate's character? What significant details do they reveal about the other characters, including Janie, Ben, and Evan?

8. How much responsibility does Kate bear for the distant relationship she has with her mother? How would Raina measure up according to Laura Lynn Baird's principles for a good mother? Given Raina's past behavior, why does she support Kate so strongly in the months following her daughter's brush with death?

9. What universal themes can be drawn from **Goodnight Nobody**---about marriage, motherhood, and balancing the two? Does Kate have to choose between fulfilling her obligations to her family and reclaiming her independence, or can she successfully do both? Of the different approaches to motherhood presented in the book, which do you most identify with?

10. Discuss the mystery aspect of the plotline and whether or not you found it convincing, taking into account plot twists, red herrings, and the concealment of the murderer's identity.

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12. Why do you suppose Jennifer Weiner chose not to have Kate make a decision about remaining in her marriage with Ben or taking a chance on a relationship with Evan? What do you think the future holds for Kate, romantically and otherwise?

13. If you have read any of Jennifer Weiner's other books (**In Her Shoes**, **Good in Bed**, **Little Earthquakes**), discuss the differences and similarities of **Goodnight Nobody** to those novels.

Author Bio

Jennifer Weiner is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author whose books have spent over five years on the *New York Times* bestseller list, with more than 11 million copies in print in 36 countries.

She is the author of the novels GOOD IN BED (2001); IN HER SHOES (2002), which was turned into a major motion picture starring Cameron Diaz, Toni Collette and Shirley MacLaine; LITTLE EARTHQUAKES (2004); GOODNIGHT NOBODY (2005); the short story collection THE GUY NOT TAKEN (2006); CERTAIN GIRLS (2008); BEST FRIENDS FOREVER (2009); FLY AWAY HOME (2010); THEN CAME YOU (2011); THE NEXT BEST THING (2012); ALL FALL DOWN (2014); WHO DO YOU LOVE (2015); MRS. EVERYTHING (2019); BIG SUMMER (2020); THAT SUMMER (2021); THE SUMMER PLACE (2022); GOLDEN HILLS (2023); THE BREAKAWAY (2024); and THE GRIFFIN SISTERS' GREATEST HITS (2025).

She is also the author of *The Littlest Bigfoot* middle-grade trilogy: THE LITTLEST BIGFOOT (2016) LITTLE BIGFOOT, BIG CITY (2017), and THE BIGFOOT QUEEN (2023).

Her nonfiction collection, HUNGRY HEART: Adventures in Life, Love, and Writing (2016), was a finalist for the PEN/Diamonstein -Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay.

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