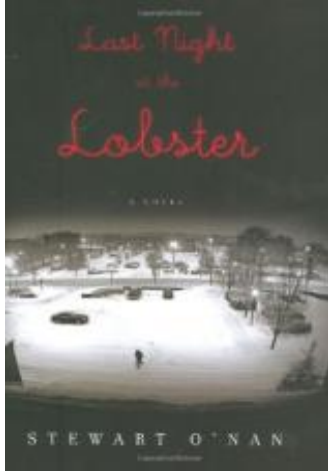


Last Night at the Lobster

by Stewart O'Nan



About the Book

Stewart O'Nan has been called "the bard of the working class" and has now crafted a frank and funny yet emotionally resonant tale set within a vivid workaday world seldom seen in contemporary fiction.

Perched in the far corner of a run-down New England mall, The Red Lobster hasn't been making its numbers and headquarters has pulled the plug. But manager Manny DeLeon still needs to navigate a tricky last shift. With only four shopping days left until Christmas, Manny must convince his near-mutinous staff to hunker down and serve the final onslaught of hungry retirees, lunatics, and holiday office parties. All the while, he's wondering how to handle the waitress he's still in love with, his pregnant girlfriend at home, and the perfect present he still needs to buy.

Last Night at the Lobster is a poignant yet redemptive look at what a man does when he discovers that his best might not be good enough.

Discussion Guide

1. Why does Manny choose to keep the restaurant open through the snowstorm? Would he have made the same decision if it hadn't been the restaurant's last day?
2. How well do you think Darden Restaurants handled closing this branch of the Red Lobster? Could they have made the transition easier for the employees?

3. When Jacquie shows up for work, she's angry with him for his glib response, saying, "Why do you have to go and make a joke about it? I don't know if you know this, but a lot of us only came in because of you." Why can't Manny see the loyalty he's aroused in some of his staff?
4. When the mother of the sick toddler demands the phone number of Manny's boss, he gives it to her even though his staff doesn't understand or approve. Have you ever had to do something that you felt was the right thing to do even if the people around you did not? Discuss how that made you feel.
5. Manny seems to have a soft spot for Coach Kashynski. Is it just sentimentality, or is there a deeper reason?
6. After buying the earrings for Deena, he thinks, "Sometimes it's not the thought that counts, just the present." Do you agree or disagree?
7. Despite the likelihood that no one will ever use the bathrooms again, the building will likely even be demolished. Manny cleans them up after the busload of sick passengers departs. What does his decision say about him?
8. Do you think that Jacquie and Manny's relationship was doomed to failure, or do you think he could have done something differently? Do you think Manny and Deena will stay together? Why or why not?
9. Manny couldn't bring himself to steal the marlin even though he defied company policy in giving away the lighthouse glasses. What, in his mind, is the difference between the two transgressions?
10. What does it say about the way businesses operate today when a man as hardworking and conscientious as Manny is treated as if he were negligible?

Author Bio

Stewart O'Nan is the author of numerous books, including *WISH YOU WERE HERE*, *EVERYDAY PEOPLE*, *IN THE WALLED CITY*, *THE SPEED QUEEN* and *EMILY, ALONE*. His 2007 novel, *LAST NIGHT AT THE LOBSTER*, was a national bestseller and a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. He was born and raised in Pittsburgh, where he lives with his family.

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