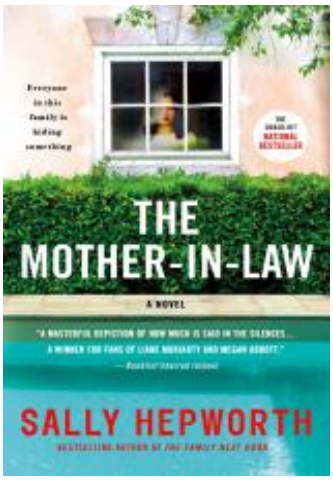
The Mother-in-Law

by Sally Hepworth



About the Book

A twisty, compelling new novel about one woman's complicated relationship with her mother-in-law that ends in death

From the moment Lucy met her husband?s mother, she knew she wasn?t the wife Diana had envisioned for her perfect son. Exquisitely polite, friendly and always generous, Diana nonetheless kept Lucy at arm?s length despite her desperate attempts to win her over. And as a pillar in the community, an advocate for female refugees, and a woman happily married for decades, no one had a bad word to say about Diana?except Lucy.

That was five years ago.

Now, Diana is dead, a suicide note found near her body claiming that she longer wanted to live because of the cancer wreaking havoc inside her body.

But the autopsy finds no cancer.

It does find traces of poison, and evidence of suffocation.

Who could possibly want Diana dead? Why was her will changed at the 11th hour to disinherit both of her children and their spouses? And what does it mean that Lucy isn?t exactly sad she?s gone?

Fractured relationships and deep family secrets grow more compelling with every page in this twisty, captivating new novel from Sally Hepworth.

Discussion Guide

1. In the opening chapter of the novel, Lucy describes feeling a ?little niggle? in the pit of her stomach when the police showed up --- a warning of oncoming danger. Are you familiar with the feeling she?s describing? When have you felt it? How do you think this ominous tone serves to set up the rest of the book?

2. THE MOTHER-IN-LAW is told in dual timelines and dual narratives --- Lucy and her mother-in-law, Diana. How does this structure affect your reading experience? Did you feel more sympathetic towards one narrator or the other?

3. What was your initial impression of Diana, both through the lens of Lucy and through hearing Diana?s own voice? How did your understanding of her and her motivations evolve throughout the book?

4. Diana and Lucy have very different definitions of what makes a ?good? mother-in-law. What you you think makes for a good mother-in-law? How universal do you think your opinion is, or how personal? How do you think you would react in Lucy?s position?

5. What did you think when you first learned about Diana?s Orchard House past? Did it make sense to you, or come totally out of the blue? How do you think it fits in to Diana?s character, and why she acts the way she does in the present timeline?

6. Before you learned about what happened on Thanksgiving, what did you think the ?incident? was? What were the clues throughout the first half of the novel that make you think that way?

7. On page 133, Diana thinks, ?When left to their own devices, bitter people can do bad things.? Do you think she?s right to asses Hakem this way? Where are the other place in the narrative where you think that this same quote applies?

8. Tom and Diana have very different philosophies about giving their children money. Is either of them correct? Or is there more of a middle ground that neither of them have considered? Do you think it?s cruel for them to let Nettie suffer when they could help pay for her treatments?

9. On page 219, Ghezala says to Lucy, ?Maybe [Diana] was so busy looking at the problems in the world, she forgot to give chances to those right under her nose.? What do you think about that statement? Do you think she?s correct, or is there something more at play?

10. Before you learned the truth of Diana?s death, did you think that Lucy did it? What made you think that?

Author Bio

Sally Hepworth is the *New York Times* bestselling author of 10 novels, most recently MAD MABEL. Sally?s novels have been called ?darkly charming? and praised by au

Sally's novels have sold millions of copies worldwide and been translated into over 30 languages.

Sally lives in Melbourne, Australia, with her family.

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