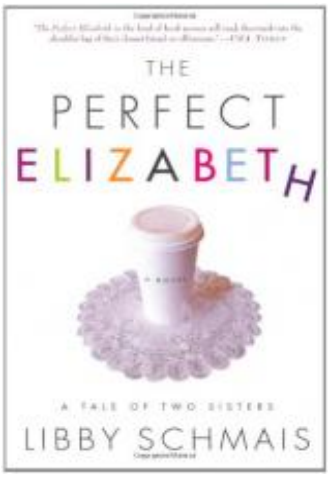
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The Perfect Elizabeth

by Libby Schmais



About the Book

This modern-day **Sense and Sensibility** is a witty and hilarious story about two sisters: Liza, a would-be poet who spends miserable days as a legal secretary; and Bette, a graduate student writing her dissertation on Toast in the English Novel. Bette has taken to eating only that which the characters she is writing about would eat: nice cups of tea, boiled egg on toast, mincemeat. . . Liza's a bit concerned. She's also worried about the status of her relationship with her actor boyfriend Gregor. They're not living together, and that's a problem.

Then there's the issue of Liza's career, or the lack thereof. Can dog-walking be considered a vocation? Liza's beginning to think so. Mercifully, Bette is merely a local phone call away.

Throughout this sassy novel, the sisters deal with unemployment, infidelity, interfering parents, Hollywood, lemmings, a pregnancy, and a wedding. *The Perfect Elizabeth* is as indulgent and cathartic as a pint of Häagen-Dazs.

Discussion Guide

1. In the first few chapters, Liza buys Bette a book on meeting men, drags her to a matchmaker, and takes her to a singles party. Why is it so important to Liza that Bette be in a relationship?

2. Bette has devoted her entire academic career to researching food in the English novel. What is behind this obsession? What role does food play in the novel as a whole?

3. Why does Liza continue walking dogs for Amelia and Gwendolyn?

4. What is the significance of the children's story that Liza writes within the novel? How does Liza the Lemming resemble Liza's life?

5. Why does Liza feel that she and Bette are incomplete parts of one perfect Elizabeth? Does that perception change throughout the novel?

6. What roles do Liza and Bette play in their family? What happens when their roles change?

7. Liza says near the beginning of the story, "everything I know how to do well is useless; everything I don't know is impossible." Why does Liza believe this?

8. Are the parents a negative or positive influence on the sisters? How have they shaped the sisters?

9. What happens to Liza during her stay in Los Angeles ? How does her perspective change?

10. The book ends on an uplifting note, but do you believe that Liza and Bette live happily ever after with Gregor and Lawrence? Where do you see the two couples in ten years' time?

Author Bio

Libby Schmais has held various jobs, ranging from working at the complaint department at Club Med to a brief stint as an astrologer. She recently co-authored a nonfiction book titled **Living Well with Cancer**. Schmais is married to her first husband, a Scottish bass player. She lives in New York City, not far from her sister, and is working on her second novel.

Critical Praise

"Schmais whips up a luscious, frothy tale of Gen-X love. . . . Unlike Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones, these sisters aren't over the top. They're very much the girls next door. . . . **The Perfect Elizabeth** is the kind of book women will read, then tuck into the shoulder bag of their closest friend or officemate."

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