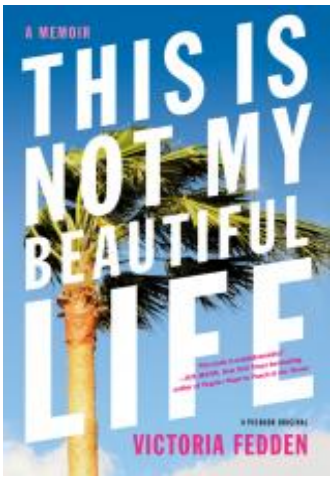
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

This Is Not My Beautiful Life

by Victoria Fedden



About the Book

If you think it sucks to live with your parents when you?re 36 and nine months pregnant, just wait till the DEA comes knocking (with the IRS in tow): welcome to Victoria Fedden?s life.

When a squad of federal agents burst through her parents? front door, Victoria Fedden felt ill-prepared to meet them: She was weeks away from her due date and her T-shirt wasn?t long enough to hide her maternity undies. As for the question of how to raise a child when you?ve just discovered that your mother and stepfather have allegedly masterminded a pump-and-dump scheme? She was pretty sure that wasn?t covered in WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU?RE EXPECTING --- and she really hoped that Bradford Cohen, the noted criminal defense attorney who famously waived his exemption on ?The Apprentice,? would prove them innocent.

THIS IS NOT MY BEAUTIFUL LIFE is the story of how Victoria lost her parents to prison and nearly lost her mind. No one ever said motherhood would be easy, but as she struggles to change diapers, install car seats and find the right drop-off line at pre-school --- no easy task, when each one is named for a stage in the lifecycle of a f*cking butterfly --- she?s also forced to ask herself whether a jumpsuit might actually complement her mom?s platinum-blonde extensions and fend off the cast of shady, stranger-than-fiction characters (like the recovering addict who scored a reality show when he started an escort service for women) who populated her parents? world.

A real-life ?Arrested Development? that could only unfold in southern Florida, THIS IS NOT MY BEAUTIFUL LIFE is a hilariously funny and unexpectedly moving memoir of a just-functional family you?ll never forget.

Discussion Guide

1. THIS IS NOT MY BEAUTIFUL LIFE begins when the DEA and IRS raid Victoria?s parents? home, and she is nine months pregnant and wearing maternity underwear. What is the worst thing you?ve ever worn while answering the door?

The best?

2. When the Gold family visits Costco to spend their last $5,000, they load up on expensive food like lobster tails and beef tenderloin. What does their choice say about them as people? Do you think they could?ve made better use of $5,000? If you had to blow that much money that fast, what would you buy?

3. When Victoria?s daughter is born, she finds herself unsure of her ability to keep another human being alive. What sorts of things have you killed? If you have children, did this affect your parenting skills at all? If you don?t have kids, just consider yourself lucky and pour yourself another glass of wine while everyone else answers.

4. Victoria writes a lot about food and the connections she makes between food and family. She is also a champion stress eater. First of all, what is the best food at this book club meeting? If there is no food, what is wrong with you people? Who has a book club with no food? Second of all, are you a stress eater too, or are you one of those lucky bitches who loses weight when they?re upset? If so, what is your secret to getting upset enough to stop being hungry because you could turn this into a million dollar diet program? Third, Victoria associates dumplings with her childhood in Delaware. What foods do you associate with your childhood or hometown?

5. Baron Von Bod becomes a reality TV star on a show that most people would never admit to actually watching. Okay, own up. What are your guilty pleasure shows? You know you have them. And while we?re at it, don?t you think Victoria deserves her own TV show too? How would you imagine it?

6. Joel offers to pay half of Ashley?s car payment when she catches him with his mistress. Come on, don?t you think he should?ve paid the whole thing? Why do you think he only offered half? If someone gave you money to keep a secret, would you do it? Why or why not?

7. Victoria makes a vision board that includes her desire for a book deal. Do you believe in vision boards now? You should totally go make one. What would you put on it? What makes them work or not work? (The keyword being ?work.?)

8. Victoria?s family lives in a tacky McMansion called Casa dei Sogni, which means ?House of Dreams? in Italian. Come up with a name for your home and use Google to translate it into another language so that it sounds classier. Why do things in other languages sound classier? How do you feel now that you have a house with a name? Don?t lie, you feel fancy.

9. Cecily chooses to ?stand by her man? throughout this ordeal. How did this make you feel? Could you relate at all? Does she make any valid points about why she stayed with him, or do you think she is just a hopeless, codependent codefendant (see what I did there?) with low self-esteem?

10. Baron Von Bod calls Victoria a spoiled brat. In what ways do you agree with him?

11. Sibling rivalry is a big theme in this book. Discuss the dynamic between Victoria and Ashley. Which sister could you relate to more? Which one was prettier? Did you agree with how Ashley handled the situation with Cecily? Was she behaving sensibly and setting healthy boundaries, or do you think she was a little harsh?

12. There are a lot of assholes in this book. Which one was the biggest, and why? Which character did you hate the most? Was there any point in the story where you wanted to strangle anyone? Who was it, and why?

Author Bio

Victoria Fedden received her MFA in Creative Writing from Florida Atlantic University. Her blog "Wide Lawns and Narrow Minds" was voted 2011's best Humor Blog by the *South Florida Sun Sentinel*, and her personal essays have been anthologized in I STILL JUST WANT TO PEE ALONE, SCARY MOMMY'S GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS, CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL and MY OTHER EX. She also regularly contributes to *Elephant Journal*, and her writing has appeared on or is forthcoming from *Scary Mommy*, *Babble* and *xoJane*, among other blogs and websites. She lives with her family in Fort Lauderdale.

This Is Not My Beautiful Life

by Victoria Fedden

Publication Date: June 7, 2016
Genres: Humor, Nonfiction
Paperback: 336 pages
Publisher: Picador
ISBN-10: 1250075289
ISBN-13: 9781250075284