



Bodecia Book Club!



The Memory Keepers Daughter by Kim Ward

This is Kim Edwards's debut novel, a big feat for a first novel which is filled with family drama, dilemma and is skillfully packaged up to be a huge debate-provoker that had the Bodecia ladies engrossed.

The novel opens in Kentucky in 1964. David Henry has married the elegant and palely wistful Norah after catching sight of her in a department store and pursuing the blonde vision. Domestic harmony is shattered when she gives birth to twins and Dr Henry recognises the signs of Down's syndrome in the second, which is his little girl. Having witnessed his own mother suffering the childhood death of his sister, he decides to spare his wife the pain of bringing up a daughter with a shortened life expectancy and informs her that the second twin, Phoebe, died at birth. In fact, he has asked the nurse on duty, a trusted colleague, to take Phoebe to a home for the mentally impaired, and thus the psychological haunting of the Henry family begins.

But unbeknown to the central character Dr Henry, a new plot strand is stirring. The nurse, Caroline Gill, is unable to place Phoebe in the institution selected by her father and runs into a snowstorm with a newborn under her arm. Fresh from his daughter's bogus memorial service, Dr Henry discovers this inconvenient act of self-sacrifice, and Caroline decides to reinvent herself as a single mother in Pittsburgh. Caroline bonds with Phoebe and becomes politically active on her behalf, while Norah Henry brings up Phoebe's twin, Paul, in a haze as she mourns her supposedly dead daughter. The erosion of her marriage to a man who can never resolve the consequences of his lie is skillfully drawn, and the 60s world of sewing circles, secret drinking and a truly desperate housewife is so well portrayed that a sense of claustrophobia leads the novel's early section.

Phoebe flourishes under the care of the heroic Caroline. Norah embarks on a series of affairs, and her son Paul rebels against the atmosphere in which he is raised.

You read and witness the lives of Phoebe, Paul and their parents over the years and each seem destined to clash, implode or collapse with revelation, and you can not put the book down in fear that you will miss something.

With such a build up towards the end of the book we wanted the ending to be dramatic, but the expected explosion turns out to be more of a happy ever after.

We gave *The Memory Keepers Daughter* 7/10

The book we are now reading is **The Help by Emma Stone**



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