



by Daniela Krien
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Fiction



The Goethe-Institut
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Love in Five Acts

Die Liebe im Ernstfall

review

Telling the stories of five very different women whose paths all intersect, and who are all searching for happiness in their own ways, this is a punchy, contemporary read whose female protagonists will be eagerly received by English-language readers.

Love in Five Acts is a suite of hard-hitting stories told by five women who are bound together by friendship and family. The novel speaks to the contemporary focus on women's experiences of motherhood and childlessness, and offers intimate and hard-hitting perspectives on issues including unwanted pregnancy, bereavement, divorce and infidelity. It explores what remains of the characters when they have fulfilled their roles as wives, mothers, friends, lovers, sisters, and daughters. Daniela Krien dares to ask whether these women want or expect too much out of their lives, and considers the extent to which they exercise control over their respective fates.

The novel's cast of characters includes Paula, who is desperate for a family and so marries the eccentric Ludger. Despite Ludger's somewhat authoritarian approach to marriage, Paula tries to convince herself she is happy, but her whole world is turned on its head when their daughter Johanna dies and Ludger disappears, blaming Paula for her death. Paula's best friend, Judith, is the protagonist of the second section of the novel. A doctor who has never wanted to marry or have children, Judith finds herself unexpectedly pregnant. The story then moves on to Brida, one of Judith's patients. Brida is a writer and has a volatile relationship with her husband, Götz. The

couple struggle to find a balance between their working and family lives and cannot make their marriage work, in spite of the physical chemistry between them. The fourth section tells the story of Malika, Götz's ex-girlfriend. She has very difficult parents, who worship her sister Jorinde and often ignore Malika. Malika cares for her parents while Jorinde – the subject of the novel's final section – pursues her acting career and lives happily with her seemingly perfect husband and their two children.

The women's stories are absorbing, drawing the reader into the characters' lives and making them feel truly invested in their predicaments. It is fascinating to see how the characters connect with one another and how their actions – and those of the men in their lives – affect them and the other protagonists. This is a book which engages with twenty-first century debates around notions of femininity and feminism, empathising with an array of perspectives on the subject

press quotes

'Daniela Krien has managed to weave the perspectives of five different women into one story. All of the women are right, and the reader will understand and be moved by them all. A must-read!'

– Anna Schudt

about the author

Daniela Krien was born in Neu-Kaliß, East Germany, in 1975. She studied communication, media, and cultural studies in Leipzig, and has been a freelance writer since 2010. Her debut novel *Someday We'll Tell Each Other Everything* was translated into 15 languages and was awarded the Nicolaus Born Debut Prize. She lives in Leipzig with her two daughters.

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