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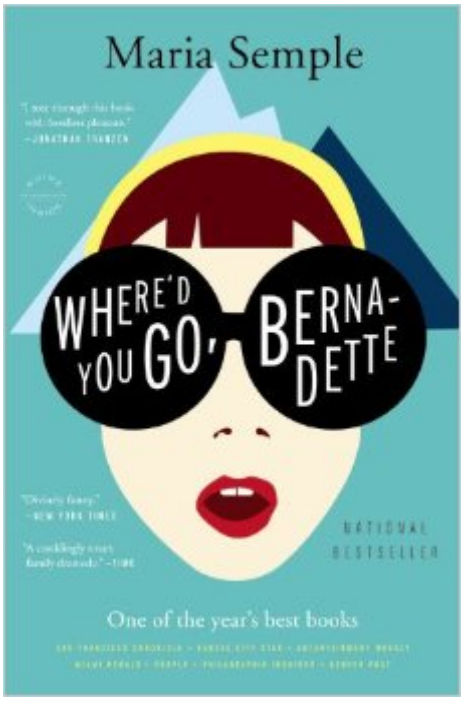
Where'd You Go, Bernadette: A Novel



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Synopsis

Bernadette Fox is notorious. To her Microsoft-guru husband, she's a fearlessly opinionated partner; to fellow private-school mothers in Seattle, she's a disgrace; to design mavens, she's a revolutionary architect, and to 15-year-old Bee, she is a best friend and, simply, Mom.Then Bernadette disappears. It began when Bee aced her report card and claimed her promised reward: a family trip to Antarctica. But Bernadette's intensifying allergy to Seattle--and people in general--has made her so agoraphobic that a virtual assistant in India now runs her most basic errands. A trip to the end of the earth is problematic.To find her mother, Bee compiles email messages, official documents, secret correspondence--creating a compulsively readable and touching novel about misplaced genius and a mother and daughter's role in an absurd world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

*This review contains spoilers*This book started out really well. I'm a big fan of satire and I found myself settling in for an enjoyable read (I LOVE Arrested Development which Maria Semple worked on, so my expectations were high). At about 40% the shine started to come off. It was the magazine article on Bernadette and her "brilliance" that did it. The woman designed ONE eco house in her entire life and yet she is lauded twenty years later as some kind of genius. Maybe this is meant to be part of the joke but it wasn't funny, especially considering that Bernadette's repressed creativity is seen to be the root cause of all her problems at the end. There needed to be some anchoring in reality. It was also at this point that I realized much of the book is written in the same voice. The simplistically written article, letters, reports etc all sound like they've been penned by the same

person. At times they're also boring and I skimmed a lot.The emails are better but Bernadette, Audrey and Soo-Lin are all remarkably similar in their whiney, self-pitying, self-absorbed, judgemental snarkiness. None of these characters are likeable but Bernadette is by far the worst and she's the one the reader is supposed to sympathize with! I did not like this character at all, and I found myself feeling very confused about exactly who is the target of satire in this book. I came to the conclusion the reader is supposed to vicariously enjoy and share in Bernadette's rants and her insufferable snobbishness.The way the family's wealth is constantly highlighted through Bernadette's spending doesn't seem to be for satirical reasons, but rather to reinforce Bernadette's superiority to Audrey and Soo-Lin who do have to worry about money.

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