



## **The Donor**

*Helen Fitzgerald*

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## **The Donor** Helen Fitzgerald

Will Marion has two perfect kidneys. His daughters aren't so lucky. Question is: which one should he save? Will's 47. His wife bailed out when the twins were in nappies and hasn't been seen since. He coped OK by himself at first, giving Georgie and Kay all the love he could, working in a boring admin job to support them. Just after the twins turn sixteen, Georgie suffers kidney failure and is placed on dialysis. Her type is rare, and Will immediately offers to donate an organ. Without a transplant, she would probably never see adulthood. So far so good. But then Kay gets sick. She's also sixteen. Just as precious. Her kidney type just as rare. Time is critical, and he has to make a decision. Should he buy a kidney - be an organ tourist? Should he save one child? If so, which one? Should he sacrifice himself? Or is there a fourth solution - one so terrible it has never even crossed his mind?

## **The Donor Details**

Date : Published July 21st 2011 by Faber And Faber (first published July 1st 2011)

ISBN :

Author : Helen Fitzgerald

Format : Kindle Edition 323 pages

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# From Reader Review The Donor for online ebook

## Stephanie says

Was an ok book but very predictable . The ending seemed to all happen very suddenly , I even checked to see if there were pages missing at the end of the book !

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## Ewa says

[ was a book reducing the two daughters to the 'good one' - Kay, lovely

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## Luca says

Yeah, yeah, so I've gone soft OK. You're looking at that book cover and thinking "Is he reviewing Chick-Lit now?" Well I'm here to tell you, this aint no fluffy love story with a ridiculously overblown plot (girl meets guy, he's a bad boy, but she wants to tame him, they shag and he doesn't call, he realises he loves her, she forgives and forgets, they get together, get married and live happily ever after. The End.) 'The Donor' epitomises the phrase "Don't judge a book by its cover". And I'll tell you why...

This book has one of the best first 100 pages of a novel I've ever read. Flat-out barnstormingly brilliant opening. Sets up the plot excellently and introduces even small nuances of character in a few sentences. I have no idea how Helen Fitzgerald did that. She manages to give so much information about people, using around 8 words. I'm still trying to work out how she did it. Because I want to be able to do that and then sell the formula.

And this book is all about the people in it. The characters are the heart of 'The Donor'. Yeah, the story plays its part of course, but if you're not with these messed up, flawed and above all REALISTIC characters, there's something wrong with you. I mean how can you not sympathise with 'Will Marion' as he does everything he can to save his daughter's lives, or the two daughter's themselves 'Georgie' and 'Kay', who are so beautifully drawn, by the end you'll be cutting out your own kidney in a bath full of ice, in the hope they can take it.

In those first 100 pages, Fitzgerald manages to grab you by the collar and drag you into this story. Before I knew it, I'd read half the book. I finished it in a day. I couldn't tear my bloodshot, tired eyes away from the pages. I had to read. Fitzgerald writes from the heart, means every word, possibly carves those words into wood with her own blood...I'm not entirely sure.

I may have over identified with this book...maybe if you're a father of two daughters, who spends everyday worried he's going to be left alone to look after them for longer than a day (it's been five years and I still can't do my eldest daughters hair...I mean I can put it in a ponytail and five seconds later she's blowing hair out of her eyes. I just can't do it) you'll understand better. I don't think so however. I think if this book doesn't move you in some way, I mean affect you in a way you weren't expecting, then you have a heart made of moss covered stone. I was shocked at how much this book affected me. It's been a long time since I've read a book which has moved me as much as this one did.

It's all about Helen Fitzgerald's writing. She writes almost poetically, not a wasted word amongst the pages. It's beautifully horrific, takes you to dark places, with an undercurrent of gallows humour throughout. 'The Donor' is about normal people dealing with uncontrollable events. You can instantly identify with characters and feel every emotion they feel throughout. It contains scenes of drug taking, crime, sex and death, gloriously mixing them to make 'The Donor' one of the stand out novels of 2011.

'The Donor' is what fiction should be all about. Real people, believable dialogue, thrilling, emotional and funny. I'm making everyone I know read this book. That means you. Go buy it now. No, not later, now.

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### **Renny Barcelos says**

Meh. It's a bit too cliché and soap-opera-ish for my taste. I loved *The Cry*, by the same author, but this felt a tad disappointing...

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### **Mirjam Penning says**

I was surprised how much I liked this book. Usually I read true crime, fiction crime, self-help books or books themed Iran. This one just kind of fell into my lap and I gave it a shot.

The characters are thought out.

There are three 'voices' in the book who tell this story. The author, the father character and one of his twin daughters. Nicely done.

I wasn't sure how the story would end, but the author wrapped that ending up very well. It all seemed to fit and I wasn't left with questions.

Heavy subjects handled in a way and written with humor so it doesn't feel too heavy.

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### **Les Edgerton says**

What if you were the only parent of two children and it was within your power to save one of their lives, but not both? How is such a decision even possible? How would you live with yourself whichever child you decided should live? How would the child you decided to sacrifice view you before she died? How would the child you saved regard you?

How would you look at yourself, no matter what choice you made?

I've just finished reading Helen FitzGerald's novel, *The Donor*, which poses this very same problem for Will Marion whose wife Cynthia left him years ago for her criminal boyfriend, leaving their twin daughters, Georgie and Kay for Will to raise.

Twin daughters who both develop kidney disease and need transplants to survive.

I can't remark on the plot much because it has multiple twists and turns that the reader should discover for him- or herself. Suffice to say that this is a complicated, multi-layered story that surprises at every turn, the tension building until it's excruciating. Any parent that reads it will be forced to consider their own children and wonder how they'd react—what they'd do in the same circumstance.

It's a brilliant character study of the three main players—the father and his two daughters—as each work through the psychological minefield individually. FitzGerald has delivered a powerful drama, gorgeously writ with grace, black humor, and compassion, and is the kind of literature one seizes upon when encountering its like and proclaims to all who will listen: Read this book!

I'm drained.

Emotionally spent.

How did it affect me?

The instant I read the last page, I drove down to my local license bureau and changed my driver's license so that it showed I'm an organ donor. That's how powerful it was. As perhaps an interesting aside, in a conversation with Ms. FitzGerald, when I told her what I'd done she revealed that she'd done the same thing in the midst of writing the book. I think many readers will do the same thing. I don't know of many novels that trigger this kind of action.

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### **Kirsty says**

When I say 'page-turner', I really mean it. I didn't even stop reading for mealtimes or to go to the loo; instead I carried the book with me, navigating with my peripheral vision. Sure, some of the dialogue was jarringly cheesy and the characters were cardboard cutouts (the junkie mother and bad-boy criminal in particular), but I was turning the pages so fast that I barely noticed! Great fun.

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### **Eva Maraki says**

"Ο ΔΩΡΗΤΗΣ"Ε.ΦΙΤΖΕΡΑΛΝΤ

Ποσο δυσκολο ε?ναι για ?ναν πατ?ρα να πρεπει να διαλ?ξει σε ποια απο τις δυο αρρωστες εφηβες κορες του θα δωσει το νεφρο του ,γιατι πασχουν απο νεφρικη ανεπαρκεια; Αυτο διαπραγματευεται αυτο το κοινωνικο μυθιστορημα,το οποιο θιγει ενα ιδιαιτερο θεμα με ζωντανη αλλα κατανοητη γραφη&επισης καταπιανεται με τα κακως κειμενα στις σχεσεις γονεων -παιδιων .Γονεας ειναι αυτος που μεγαλωνει με κοπο ενα παιδι&οχι καποιος που το γεννησε και το παρατησε.Η εγκληματικη αδιαφορια καποιων βιολογικων γονεων σοκαρει .Δυσκολο θεμα αλλα η συγγραφεας κατορθωσε να δωσει την καλυτερη λυση &ο καθενας να παρει ο,τι του αξιζει.Νεμεση,τιση,καθαρση για τους καθημερινους της ηρωες αλλα και για τον αναγνωστη που συμπασχει με τα κοριτσια αλλα εξοργιζεται με καποιους εγκληματιες που θελουν να λεγονται γονεις.Μου αρεσε,ενα βιβλιο πρωτοτυπο και διδακτικο

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## **Anne says**

I've read the Amazon reviews on this one with increasing incredulity. Recommended to fans of Diane Chamberlain and Jodi Picoult? Really? This is a really black tale set in Glasgow, set among the useless and hopeless, with some of the most dysfunctional and unlikeable characters I've ever come across. Will is boredom personified, Georgie (one daughter) is someone you'd cross the street to avoid, Kay, the other daughter, is so perfect she could sprout wings. The mother - selfish drug addict with no redeeming features. So why did I have a tear in my eye at the end? I'm getting to really love Helen Fitzgerald's angry, edgy writing. Loved this one... but if you're expecting a Jodi Picoult style treatment you'll be so disappointed.

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## **Allie says**

I found this book a little depressing in places but it was a very emotional read, covering a huge moral dilemma topic. Its very different from her other work but I'd recommend it, as long as you aren't looking for a light-hearted read!

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## **JJ Marsh says**

I found this thoroughly enjoyable and thought about it for a long time later. Something about the way the author chooses characters which are not easy to like and puts them in circumstances where they are forced to make a choice of personality really appealed to me.

It's a peculiar mixture of painful and funny, the humour as dark as it gets. The book confronts horrible questions such as who to save, why you hate your parent(s) and what love really involves.

Each individual has fallen into a pattern of behaviour and expects someone else to say them. Georgie thinks it will be the love of her life, or her mum. Will hopes it will be Cynthia, or the girls, or failing that, Janice, his penis-twisting neighbour. Cynthia knows there are only two who can save her and they both begin with H.

Will's awareness of his own failings make him a frustrating but likeable person, especially if you have a touch of the useless yourself. The book moves swiftly along Will's mental trajectory, making the reader cheer and cringe at his determination and ineptitude. The scene when he gets plastered and writes down the pros and cons of his twin daughters is moving and honest.

The scene that took me by surprise is Heath's observation of Georgie and Kay in the pub. The writer makes you absolutely convinced that this scumbag should never ever be allowed near those girls. What happens next had me appalled, alarmed and applauding.

I liked the style, the twist on expectation and admired the ending. It's short but drags you into to a situation you cannot help but consider. What if ...? This book feels like someone has peeled away the sanitary layers of normality and found something much more satisfying beneath.

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## **Bill Kupersmith says**

I did not expect that *The Donor* would be as laugh-out-loud off-the-wall as *Dead Lovely* or an ingenue as endearing as Bronny in *The Devil's Staircase*, yet I was very disappointed and suspect that Helen Fitzgerald's powers of invention failed with this book, in which a clueless and ineffective father has to decide which of his twin daughters will get one of his kidneys. At scarcely a third of the way into the book a simple and quite plausible twist in the plot occurred to me that would take care of this dilemma as well as providing a quite satisfying ending. Although I read lots of mysteries, I am not particularly good at figuring such things out, simply because I don't pay close attention. So I had a moment of being very pleased with myself to have found a plausible, if far too facile, solution. But as I continued with the book the horrible sinking feeling that my simple-minded solution was also the author's, and it was. So three stars is generous. There are some amusing incidents, but why bother?

But I could not resist later checking reviews on Amazon.co.uk and Goodreads to see what other readers thought, and was utterly dumbfounded to discover how many thought *The Donor* was a serious novel with realistic characters about a father facing a critical ethical and emotional choice. So I suppose we readers come in all sorts and conditions

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## **Annabel Rose says**

This book is one which remained on my mind long after I finished it- dark, and very real, but the characters are amazing. It kept me hooked- I was very anti-social for a few days as I dedicated every spare second to devouring the next page, and the ending was great, too. I felt it did the book as a whole justice, and I liked the way in which the entire story was very real, the characters especially, with a certain depth which meant that I didn't feel able to form all encompassing judgements upon them. Fantastic!

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## **Tea Time with Marce says**

From my blog

What an emotional thriller. A single father with twin daughters who were abandoned by the heroine addict mother. This book has young adult scenarios, drugs, violence, organ donor info and parenting all wrapped up in this tragic sad story.

*The Donor* was told by all characters which I enjoyed, but mainly Will, the father. The voices were distinct but the overall style at times didn't flow, something felt off to me.

Such a sweet story at first, the unique spin of having a single father bringing up his girls and genuinely missing and loving the mom. The parenting was comforting and realistic with learning as he goes. He is not a man that makes decisions, his choice is just to make others happy by going with whatever they wanted. Consequences and decision making was a huge take away from this story, how others are affected and when extreme thoughts are pursued or even thought about.

Growing up Kay was the idealistic child and Gracie was the moody unapproachable child. Twins but different in every way. The way they approached life and then their illness was described in an effective

heartbreaking way.

When they found out both girls were sick, Will knew he had to find the mother. This journey, the planning and action was a highlight. The teenager who accepted the case to find the mother and Will's notes on how to choose which daughter was hilarious and painstakingly stupid but entertaining, both add to consequences of how it ends.

There was a major mouth open moment which was obvious to me but I think won't be to all and will add to the realistic drama of events. Scenes involving a neighbour I thought was over the top and completely unnecessary, may even disgust some readers.

Overall a great adult fiction thriller. It made me think of a few novels, *My Sisters Keeper*/Jodi P, *Gone Girl*/Gillian F and *After You*/Julie B.

Favourite quote

For the first time ever, he completely lost it: yelling and screaming in the hospital, trying to hit that wretched feral stray who was my mother. That's what happens when you store shit inside for a lifetime. It rots, then explodes.

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## **Beth says**

This book is, frankly, trashy. *Really* trashy. The characters are paper-thin (the dutiful but boring dad! the flighty drug-addict runaway mum! her scumbag husband! the bad twin, all sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll and screaming fits! the good twin, all saintly halo and perfect temper!) and never once ascend above the annoying stereotypes they have been given. The twins are particularly frustrating characters - Georgie, the "bad" twin, is not "bad" in as in "evil", but she is foul-tempered, foul-mouthed, violent and she has always been this way. Kay, on the other hand, is perfect. Sweet, loving, ambitious, NEVER a cross word to her dad. There are simply no people like this, no people who are such extremes. And it is vital to sympathise with the twins, which I didn't.

The plotting is addictive but atrocious. I read this one really quickly, and I didn't stop reading for a lot of it. It's fast-paced and the writing is so minimalist that you can get through a lot very snappily. But Fitzgerald totally fails to capitalise on any of the interesting things about her premise. Should he let one girl die? Will only contemplates that very briefly, and while on drugs. Doesn't go through with the organ donation thing. The twist about the parentage is no twist at all because it's obvious from the start. The plotting is pure pulp, with a special mention to the end, which is so XXX that I spent most of it saying, "Oh, God, it's not going there..." (but it is, and it's sad that the novel had to end on such a duff note, because my rating might have been kinder had that not left a sour taste in my mouth.)

There are so many strands that seem pointless or left hanging, such as Georgie's brief, bizarre non-relationship with the seventeen-year-old stalker Will hires to track down Georgie's mother, which just *ends*, or my personal favourite, Will's relationship with Linda, which seems to be there solely to assure the adult readers that, really, ignore the two eighteen-year-olds that are central to the plot, this is not a YA novel. I have no problem with sex scenes, even the S+M ones on display here - they're not at all graphic, but they are so pointless and gratuitous, contributing absolutely nothing to the plot except another character and a bit of very "adult" sex. Yawn. It felt like it was supposed to be funny, which it wasn't.



And yet the writing is good. The humour is especially great. Even though I don't have my book to hand, I can still summon up this one from my memory: Will is watching his twin girls in the hospital beds, both of them are very sick and he's beside himself with worry: *"Will would have shot himself right then and there had his gun not been filed under G in his filing cabinet."*

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