



Between Families

Karin Mitchell

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12-year-old Seffra knows that her drug-addicted mother isn't perfect, but they're family and love each other. Sometimes love isn't enough, though, and when Seffra moves into an institution, a center with kids from all kinds of backgrounds, she gets a reality check and struggles to accept the control the institution exerts over her every decision.

This realistic account examines institutionalization, shame, sexual abuse, family, and identity and calls attention to the struggles that children of parents with addictions face.

Between Families Details

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From Reader Review Between Families for online ebook

Emily says

How can I possibly put into words what this book spoke to me? There were so many times I just wanted to reach into Seffra's life and pull her out. To hold her and tell her everything would be ok. To stand up to the "adults" in her life (when little Seffra was more mature than any of them). It made me sad to read this book, but it also made me cheer for an amazingly strong little girl who I want to believe will turn out "okay." It's hard to recommend a book that I know will leave just about anyone feeling like there's so much wrong in the world - but what I believe we need is just that, so we will be willing to make a change.

I received a copy of this book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

Michael says

Navigating the system of social services is a daunting and overwhelming thing. For a twelve year old girl who is only trying to be reunited with her unstable drug-addicted mother, it is nearly impossible. The obstacles facing Seffra, the character who is at the center of Between Families, are volatile and unknown, and Seffra must hit them head-on in order to survive. Her life is marked by the unexpected, from her mother's tenderness and adoration that turns in an instant into verbal and physical abuse, to the moments at school when Seffra is trying to grab ahold of something resembling her identity, to the drug runs that her mother makes without Seffra's complete understanding. A bag of McDonald's may lead to several nights on her own. A gift from the art museum may be all that remains of the affection of her mother. Seffra handles it all with an intuition and a self-awareness that comes with so much upheaval. She makes it through the difficulties because she has to, and a young girl in such a situation would only have the wisdom of experience as her guide. She acts instinctively and realistically in Karin Mitchell's portrayal, one that is formed from Mitchell's own experience in serving abused and neglected children. The author does not get in the way of the story, and that is Mitchell's brilliance. Seffra is flesh and blood, a character who is a composite of so many children who have suffered at the hands of survival. We resonate with her humanity, even as we may not have experienced all that she has endured. The human spirit is what we are connecting with here, and it is what pulls us in to the story. We feel Seffra's confusion through the first half of the story. We wander with her from place to place, both in the physical setting, which Mitchell describes in full enough detail for us to feel the shag carpeting and see the glow of the dust in the sunlight from the window, and in the places within Seffra as she tries to grasp whatever sense she can make of the situations of her childhood. As the story professes, Seffra grows into adolescence, and into the darkness of realization. We feel the full gravity of each episode. Mitchell's dialogue is tight and gritty, an aspect that exposes the rawness of Seffra's pain. The episodes where Seffra is undergoing counseling are especially poignant in their depictions. The reader is in the sessions with her, feeling Seffra's conflicting emotions and owning her desperation and anger. For survivors of abuse and for survivors of the system, there is a comforting familiarity in the pages of Between Families. Reading the book, they will discover that there are people who understand, who know what it's like. For those who have been spared the shame of abuse, Between Families serves as a necessary story that gives victims a voice. It is an important book, and the voice of Seffra resonates loudly, echoing in the readers heart long after the last page is turned. Bravo to Mitchell for having the courage and the skill to tell the story so powerfully and realistically.

Danielle Lima says

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

I know a few people growing up like Seffra. I kept reading to see what became of her. I would read a follow up book to continue to read about her life.

Angela says

Had many late night reading this book because I wanted to read "a few more pages" about the little girl and see where life took her next. The story is sad, but real for too many kids. The author did a great job giving this little girl a voice and keeping us engaged in the story. I almost feel bad giving it 5 stars because, the topic is brutal, sad, heartbreakin but it is also real for too many kids. This fictional story did a great job bringing it too life. I really hope there is a follow up book that continues the journey that Seffra is on.

Sheila Brimmer says

This book had me on the first page. I truly enjoyed it! It is a must read for everyone. I can't wait to see what the author has planned next!

Kurt says

This is a powerful book that takes the reader on a journey through a life that, though fictional, is the reality for many children out there. I found myself constantly wondering what Seffra would do next, because even though she is strong for her age, her reactions can be unpredictable, and you're always hoping for the best. I can see how this work will be incredibly helpful to people who have experienced a childhood like Seffra, and give them the power to persevere. I look forward to a follow up to see where her life goes from here!

Mimi Davis Hopkins says

Lost And All Alone

This is a very well written story which pulls at your heart. The characters will draw you into their lives making you feel some sort of connection. Great Read

Alicia Huxtable says

Very Interesting

This book was a very interesting read. I wasn't sure about it at first but once I started reading, I felt horrible for everything that Seffra went through. But it was also good reading her overcoming these trials as well

Elizabeth Swaggerty says

I read this book in two days - not because it is super short, but because I had to see what happened to Seffra, the girl who experiences way too many "hard knocks" in her twelve years. As an educator (former elem and middle school teacher), I am familiar with the terrible things that can happen to families and, in particular, children. Seffra is a reminder that kids are at the mercy of the adults who are charged with their care. This is a well-written, engaging, smart, (very funny at times, too) first novel by this author, who also happens to be my cousin. I wanted to give it 5 stars, but was afraid reviewers might think I gave it 5 stars simply because the author is my cousin. :-)

Tom Bromley says

I received a free copy of this book through Goodreads.

This was a thought provoking book. I found it very interesting and enjoyed the characters very much. I will look for other books by this author !

Judith says

Between Families, is a beautiful debut novel, by Karin Mitchell. It's smart and well-written and eats at your mind in a few dark places. (Yes, you, order your copy now). Seffra's inner dialogue, anger and confusion, poke at your heart in different notes, sometimes staccato, sometimes legato. I loved the plant imagery woven through the text, paralleling Seffra's growth. I liked that Mitchell didn't wrap everything up neatly at the end, because this is the between.

Karin Mitchell says

Between Families is a fast, solid read. You can order a print copy or read it on your phone. It's an easy-enough read to lend itself well to either format. There's a fair amount of swearing in it. The content is of the most serious type but there are a few laughs to break it up. The characters are as real as they come. My favorite character was Boogie, the proselytizing homeless man who gives sermons in rhymes from atop an overturned milk crate. I cried when I finished the book this last time around. It is a very real story to me.

Well, it's my book, so I kind of have to give it 5 stars so it starts off strong in the ratings. You goodreads folks will mercilessly grade it down as discriminating critical thinkers are mandated to do (and I'm glad to be one of those readers.) But with an eye toward the future, I hope you'll give it a shot.

The truth is, if I read it as the critical reader, I'd probably give it 4 stars, which is still well-worth the read. I just think five stars is reserved for the truly great works. This is (to my knowledge,) the only book of its kind.

It tells the story of Seffra Morgan, 12, who is removed from a life where she has no guidelines, and placed in residential treatment (institutional living.) This story was important to me which is why I wrote it. But I also wrote it because I wanted to be an author. I worked hard in graduate school on making sure this book was worth releasing. I did a Kickstarter to raise the money to have quality cover design and editing prior to release.

Emma says

I was fortunate enough to win a copy of this book from Goodreads Giveaways.

Between Families is a beautifully written, heart breaking work of art. It made me feel a whirlwind of emotions and faced harsh realities of the real world that we are so often to scared to confront.

As a reader who has lived a happy life, this book terrified and fascinated, all the while making me count my own blessings and realize how much I take for granted.

Between Families is a truly life-changing novel that I would highly recommend.

Veda Stamps says

A dark and troubling realistic world

Karin Mitchell's Between Families will haunt me for years to come. It's not a book for everyone. The book touches on themes of domestic violence, self-mutilation, addiction, bullying, and mental illness. Mitchell does a fantastic job realistically portraying all the characters especially Seffra, who I felt great sympathy. This year I have read three books with mothers who are troubled, selfish and masochist. Needless to say I'm looking for old Brady Bunch clips on YouTube after this one.

Between Families is well written and will appeal to readers who are looking for truth and not fluff.

Amber Brummer says

Great story and definitely a page turner! It is a fast read, perfect on a road trip, vacation or work travel. I took it the gym and read it on a bike. Either way you're not going to want to put it down, and when you do, you'll be left thinking about Seffra, the protagonist, and what will become of her. You just want to dive in and bring Seffra home with you. Now that I've finished the book, I still find myself thinking about her, that constitutes 5 stars, doesn't it?
