

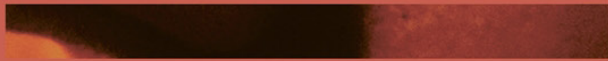


'Jessie Stephens is a star'
LECH BLAINE

Jessie Stephens



Something
Bad is
Going to
Happen



'Refreshingly honest, scarily
funny and absurdly wise'
HAYLEY SCRIVENOR



Reading Group Notes

ABOUT THE BOOK

Adella is facing the dawn of a new year and the end of her twenties – and she’s in a psychiatric unit recovering from a mental breakdown. A decade earlier, her life held such promise; she had every option in her hand. How did it come to this?

As we go back and walk with Adella through her twenties, she searches for her grand purpose in love, career and travel. At her side during the tumultuous highs and lows is her best friend, Jake, who is facing his own challenges and opportunities. They both know the future must have something better to offer – but why does it also always feel, in the bottom of their stomachs, as though something bad is going to happen?

Raw and revelatory, *Something Bad is Going to Happen* is a heart-stopping new work from one of Australia’s most exciting writers. Dealing with the weight young women bear through pressure, anxiety, rejection, this is a generation-defining novel – wise, vital, deeply compelling.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jessie Stephens is a Sydney-based author, writer and podcaster. She’s an Executive Editor at Mamamia and co-host of the podcasts *Mamamia Out Loud* and *Cancelled*. She is a regular on Channel 10’s *The Project* and ABC radio and television, and her work has appeared in *Body and Soul*, *Vogue*, and LitHub.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THESE QUESTIONS DISCUSS THEMES FROM THE NOVEL, INCLUDING SUICIDE AND RAPE. PLEASE NOTE, THEY INCLUDE SPOILERS.

1. Near the beginning of the novel, Adella jokes to Jake that she and Jake are funnier people because they have depression. Why do you think she makes this joke, and do you agree?
2. When twenty-year-old Adella meets Nathan, she frequently tries to give him something he wants, often at the expense of her own needs, particularly with regards to their sex life and the potential for a romantic relationship. What do you think would have helped her make different decisions around this?
3. What do you make of Adella's relationship with Lottie? How would you characterise it?
4. Adella believes writing is a privilege insofar as only certain types of people have the brain for it, and it is separate from simply 'being smart'. How else might you think about writing as a form of privilege? In what ways is it *not* a privilege?
5. Adella remembers going through high school during a period of political change, for example, Australia's first woman prime minister coming to power. There is also a reference to a *Harry Potter* character. What other ways does the novel situate us in a particular time and place and how might the experience of living through these moments shape Adella's views of the world? Can you think of any other significant national or global changes that occurred during this period which may have affected Adella's sense of the world? What experiences feel more universal and consistent across cultures and generations?
6. We hear from present-day and past Adella, and Jake, at various intervals. How might Sophia's point of view offer a different perspective on Adella and Sophia's friendship?
7. Throughout the novel there are references to wealth, for example, via Nathan's family and Jake's father's attitude towards status symbols. Where else has the book referred to markers of wealth and how does this interact with other aspects of contemporary life for the characters?
8. Adella and Sophia have a big fight during their trip to Thailand. How realistic did you find this conflict? Was it more difficult to sympathise with one woman over the other? How does the novel deal with this fallout?
9. During the fight, Sophia reminds Adella about Alistair. What does this tell us about Adella's character and their friendship? How does it sit with everything else we know about Adella?

10. Why do you think Adella responds to romantic rejection the way she does, both with Alistair and also with Nathan?
11. What do you think about the phrase 'Almost Rape'? Discuss.
12. Why do you think Sophia and Adella couldn't repair their friendship in the aftermath of the fight? What was holding each of them back from this? How do you think this might play out if they were at a different age (e.g. during high school or in their thirties)?
13. In describing her relationship with Theo, Adella says that falling in love should be the absence of anxiety. How does this bear out for her, and do you agree with this idea? Why/why not?
14. Why do you think Adella is unable to write anymore?
15. How would you characterise the friendship between Adella and Jake? What does each of them need from and give the other? How does this change over the years?
16. What do you think about Jake's position on medication with regards to his experience after his father's death? He talks about the difference between 'pain' and being sick. Do you agree?
17. Through Jake's and Adella's experiences, what does the novel reveal about different aspects of depression? How does it present itself differently or similarly for each character?
18. How does the story deal with the aftermath of Jake's suicide? What does it not show?
19. What do you think causes Adella's breakdown?
20. Lottie accuses Adella of not trying. Do you think this is a fair read of Adella? Why or why not?