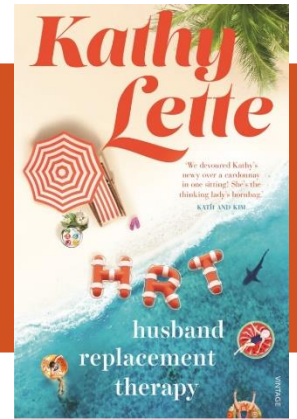




HRT: Husband Replacement Therapy

Kathy Lette



Author Background

Kathy Lette was born in Sydney's southern suburbs in 1958. She first attracted attention in 1979 when she co-authored the book *Puberty Blues*, a strongly autobiographical, pro-feminist teen novel about two 13-year-old girls attempting to improve their social status by ingratiating themselves with a group of surfers. The book was made into a film in 1981 and a TV series in 2012.

Lette became a newspaper columnist and sitcom writer but returned to the novel form with *Girl's Night Out* in 1988 followed by several more including *Foetal Attraction*, *Mad Cows*, *Altar Ego*, *Nip 'n' Tuck* and *Dead Sexy*, to name a few.

Lette moved to the United Kingdom in 1988 and took full British citizenship in 2011. She has two children with fellow Australian expatriate, Geoffrey Robertson.

In recognition of her many novels and advocacy of equality, human rights, and physical and mental health both nationally and internationally, Lette was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of Wollongong in 2017.

Book Summary

What do you do when you're told you've got terminal cancer at 50? Take up crochet, get religion and bow out gracefully? Or upend your life and spend every remaining minute exploring new pleasures?

Ruby has always been the generous mediator among her friends, family, and colleagues, which is why they have all turned up to celebrate her 50th birthday. But after a few too many glasses of champers, Ruby's speech doesn't exactly go to plan. Instead of delivering the witty and warm words her guests are expecting, Ruby takes her moment in the spotlight to reveal what she really thinks of every one of them. She even accuses her husband of having an affair.

It's blisteringly brutal. As the stunned gathering gawks at Ruby, the birthday girl concludes her monologue with the throwaway comment that she has terminal cancer. She has cashed in her life savings and plans on taking her two sisters cruising into the sunset for a dose of Husband Replacement Therapy. Courageous? Or ruthlessly selfish?

Do Ruby's sisters even want to go with her now that she's cast herself off into social Siberia?

Discussion Questions

- ❖ There is a growing trend for women to leave their marriages in their 50s. Why do you think this may be?
- ❖ Do you think menopause is discussed – publicly and/or privately – enough, too much, not at all? What is behind this?
- ❖ What would be the first things you would do if you received a health prognosis that was not conducive to a long life?
- ❖ In *HRT* there is some strong commentary on helicopter parenting, suggesting it discourages one's children from growing up and leaving home. Would you concur or disagree with the author here?
- ❖ How do you feel about Ruby's behaviour, at sea and at home?
- ❖ Beneath the bawdy humour of *HRT*, there is some strong and poignant messaging for busy women running families, homes, and careers. What were your takeaways from *HRT*?
- ❖ Novels featuring sisters are eternally popular. What is it about this type of sibling relationship that is so appealing to readers?
- ❖ There is a reading group in the novel whose members are accused of only pretending to read the books they talk about. It's time to come clean: have you ever done this? Be honest! And remember, whatever is discussed at book club, stays at book club!

References

- ❖ Wikipedia: Kathy Lette https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathy_Lette
- ❖ Penguin: *HRT* Husband Replacement Therapy, Kathy Lette: <https://www.penguin.com.au/books/hrt-husband-replacement-therapy-9781760890124>
- ❖ Penguin Book Club notes: <https://www.penguin.com.au/book-clubs/2605-hrt-book-club-notes>