

Sandwich

by Catherine Newman



Summary

For the past two decades, Rocky has looked forward to her family's yearly escape to Cape Cod. Their humble beach-town rental has been the site of sweet memories, sunny days, great meals, and messes of all kinds: emotional, marital, and—thanks to the cottage's ancient plumbing—septic too.

This year's vacation, with Rocky sandwiched between her half-grown kids and fully aging parents, promises to be just as delightful as summers past—except, perhaps, for Rocky's hormonal bouts of rage and melancholy. (Hello, menopause!) Her body is changing—her life is, too. And then a chain of events sends Rocky into the past, reliving both the tenderness and sorrow of a handful of long-ago summers.

It's one precious week: everything is in balance; everything is in flux. And when Rocky comes face to face with her family's history and future, she is forced to accept that she can no longer hide her secrets from the people she loves.

Courtesy of HarperCollinsPublishers

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About the Author

Catherine Newman is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the memoirs *Catastrophic Happiness* and *Waiting for Birdy*, the middle-grade novel *One Mixed-Up Night*, the kids' craft book *Stitch Camp* (co-authored with Nicole Blum), the best-selling how-to books for kids *How to Be a Person* and *What Can I Say?* and the novels *We All Want Impossible Things*, *Sandwich*, and *Wreck* (forthcoming October 2025).

She writes the Substack newsletter *Crone Sandwich* and has been a regular contributor to the *New York Times*, *Real Simple*, *O, The Oprah Magazine*, *Cup of Jo*, and many other publications. She lives in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Courtesy of the author's website <https://www.catherinenewmanwriter.com/>

Discussion Questions

1. How do secrets work in this book? Why are there so many of them and how do they relate to each other and/or move the story along?
2. How did you feel about the character named Rocky's Menopausal Body?
3. This is, to some extent, a book about a long marriage. What are your thoughts about Rocky and Nick's relationship?
4. What about Rocky's relationships with her young adult kids? Her own aging parents?
5. Did you have a favorite character? What made you connect with this character?
6. If you could have given a single piece of advice to one of the characters what would it have been?
7. How important do you think the setting was to the way the story unfolded?
8. Does this book actually have a plot, and how would you describe it?
9. Did the book end the way you thought it would? Was the ending delightful, satisfying, annoying, enraging, or none of the above? What word would you use to describe the ending?
10. How do you feel about the author's use of humor and sarcasm throughout the book? Do you think it was an effective storytelling technique?
11. How does the title *Sandwich* reflect the book's plot and themes?

Questions provided by catherinenewmanwriter.com and libromaniacs.com

Professional Reviews

Library Journal (05/24/24):

Starred Review Newman (*We All Want Impossible Things*) has skillfully crafted both setting and characters in this novel that will resonate with all in the “sandwich generation,” caregivers for parents and children alike. Fiftysomething writer Rocky has been enjoying her family’s annual summer Cape Cod trip for more than 20 years. This novel focuses on a single week with Rocky’s husband, Nick, and their now twentysomething kids, Jamie and Willa, sharing their one-bathroom rental with Rocky’s parents and Jamie’s girlfriend, Maya. The familiar setting gives Rocky plenty of opportunity to both dwell on the family’s messy past and hold tight to the sunnier memories. As in most families, there are painful secrets, and Rocky is confronted with sharing hers. There is just enough humor thrown in that readers may laugh as much as they cry at the all-too-relatable situations and the razor-sharp witty conversations among the family members.

Kirkus (04/15/24):

Starred Review Her family’s annual trip to Cape Cod is always the highlight of Rocky’s year—even more so now that her children are grown and she cherishes what little time she gets with them. Rocky is deep in the throes of menopause, picking fights with her loving husband and occasionally throwing off her clothes during a hot flash, much to the chagrin of her family. She’s also dealing with her parents, who are crammed into the same small summer house (with one toilet that only occasionally spews sewage everywhere) and who are aging at an alarmingly rapid rate. Rocky’s life is full of change, from her body to her identity—she frequently flashes back to the vacations of years past, when her children were tiny. Although she’s grateful for the family she has, she mourns what she’s lost. Newman imbues Rocky’s internal struggles with importance and gravity, all while showcasing her very funny observations about life and parenting. She examines motherhood with a raw honesty that few others manage—she remembers the hard parts, the depths of despair, panic, and anxiety that can happen with young children, and she also recounts the joy in a way that never feels saccharine. She has a gift for exploring the real, messy contradictions in human emotions. As Rocky puts it, “This may be the only reason we were put on this earth. To say to each other, *I know how you feel.*” A moving, hilarious reminder that parenthood, just like life, means constant change.