



# **My Sister's Child**

*Caroline Finnerty*

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**My Sister's Child is the story of two sisters, and one huge question.**

Jo is the elder sister, responsible and hardworking. Isla is carefree and has always avoided being tied down. The sisters have always had a strained relationship, but when Isla asks Jo for something that rocks the very foundations of the family that Jo has worked so hard to have, she is horrified. And, as Isla persists in her pleas, Jo fears she will lose the one thing she holds most dearly.

Thought-provoking and compelling, this is a layered and moving story of sisterhood, love and lies and the finely-woven link between nature and nurture that will challenge the way you think about motherhood.

## My Sister's Child Details

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## **From Reader Review My Sister's Child for online ebook**

### **Vivian says**

Two sisters and an ultimate sacrifice. Years later, after Isla is given heartbreaking news, she hopes Jo will return the kindness. Has she misjudged her sister? "Maybe the years had layered distance, and lacquered some of those thorny memories."

~ a story of jealousy, unearthed heartache and hope for what is good and right.

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### **Melissa says**

The story of 2 sisters. Jo is desperately trying to get pregnant and has reached the end of her options to have a child of her own. Her eggs simply will not sustain a pregnancy even with IVF. Seeing Jo's struggle and devastation, her sister Isla offers to donate her eggs to allow her sister to become a mother. After struggling with the thought of her husband's sperm and sister's egg making an embryo, she finally decides that ultimately she will be the baby's mother and it will allow her husband to have a biological child. Fast forward 14 years and Jo is a typical mom with a typical resentful teenage girl. Isla is now about to be 39 and yearning for a baby even though she is single. She decides to go it alone with IVF but is crushed when she learns she cannot have a child of her own as she is going through early menopause. Then she remember that she produced 2 eggs making 2 embryos all those years ago. Since Jo has decided not to have another child and it is just sitting in cryo, she asks Jo for the remaining embryo and Jo refuses.

This is a really tricky book. Overall, I really don't like Jo for being so selfish. However, I can completely feel some of the insecurities and fear she has thinking her child will leave her if she realizes her aunt isn't really her aunt and how her husband will feel if another child is born that is biologically his even though he's completely ok with it. But her main reasons for withholding the embryo are about judgement on her sister's part when they should be sympathy for what she is going through. And Isla, she's like the sister with a heart of gold but such a mess at the same time. She never threatens to take action in order to get the embryo nor does she threaten to tell the daughter the truth about her conception or even go to the husband. This is something that should rip sisters apart for good but Isla decides she will just have to accept it and in doing so she decides to better herself and learns to let her guard down and open her heart up to let love in. I hate that this book didn't really let you know what happened down the road, but it did leave letting the reader know that Isla was on to great things no matter what came next.

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### **Shirley says**

I've never read any books by this author before, I discovered the book on the shelve at the library and just loved the cover, it was a really an enjoyable read, loved the characters, storyline was really good, just downloaded another book by this author.

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### **Susan Becraft says**

## **Coming up on Dr. Phil, "Dr. Phil, help me sort out my two mothers!"**

This is the story of two sisters, each of whom desperately wants to have a baby. Jo, a successful attorney and happily married, is unable to conceive because her eggs cannot travel from her ovaries. Isla is 39, living from paycheck to paycheck, and wants a man in her life before getting pregnant.

This book, although stultifying, hit several of my hot buttons, thus forcing me to read to the last page. How many similar stories about people obsessed with recreating themselves have I read by now? With the advent of IVF, egg donors, sperm donors, surrogates, open adoption to name the most popular methods, I have a hunch that there are many more to come, each a variation on the same theme.

Jo, after learning of her medical problem, refuses on no uncertain terms that she will never adopt. She is so thoroughly unlikable that I offered up a little thank you prayer to the patron saint of orphans. Everything ultimately comes crashing down when she selects the donor of the eggs. She and her husband have a beautiful daughter, and Jo turns into a helicopter parent on steroids.

In the meantime, Isla is so busy with her waitressing job in an unfashionable diner and taking advantage of her kind boss that she forgets that her clock now sounds like Big Ben. A lightning bolt hits and convinces her that, by golly, she needs no man to make her dream come true.

I found few redeeming qualities in the book. The plot is stale and overused, the quality of the writing is unimpressive, and except for the two men (who should have run for the hills), I disliked the sisters and even the poor daughter. And a word about language, a subject dear to my heart. When did it become grammatically correct to say "her and me" and other permutations, as in, "Her and me is going to a film"? I have looked upon writers as setting a high bar with the most important tools of their trade: words and grammar.

I will admit to a bias. All my life I have been a workaholic. Neither my husband nor I ever wavered from our premarital decision to remain childless. Not once did we have an uncontrollable urge to replicate ourselves. Even as recently as twenty years ago, people we barely knew had no qualms about calling us selfish. For all these ill-mannered people knew, we were desperately trying to get pregnant. It was around that time that all the research on human reproduction began to bear fruit. Friends of ours jumped on the bandwagon, spent years as human guinea pigs, a king's ransom, remained childless and ultimately divorced. It was heartbreaking.

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## **HappyRuth says**

A very good book. Interesting reading about the ups and downs in the life of sisters. This book was found on Kindle.

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## **Meital Ben-Daniel says**

Many thoughts are evoked in this novel about the right to be a parent.  
An intense and complicated sisterly-relationship between Jo and Isla.

I liked it ! A good read !

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## Emma Crowley says

My Sister's Child is the fourth novel from Caroline Finnerty. I loved her last release *Into the Night Sky* which I reviewed for the blog last year and am secretly still hoping that Jack will get his own novel in the future. But with this new release Caroline has taken us in a completely different direction and written a very topical novel which to me would be an excellent selection for a book club. Caroline poses a huge, thought provoking question one which I couldn't form a clear answer to when I first read of the issue being raised nor do I think I can having read the full book. What if you donated eggs to your sister so she could fulfill her lifelong dream to become a parent? Well, to many that might be straightforward as we would do anything to help our flesh and blood if we could wouldn't we? But then turn the situation around - now you are the one who can't conceive naturally and want to fill the void and having a child would cement everything in your life and complete you. The only problem is there is one embryo left in storage and it is legally your sisters as you waived all rights once the donation was made. Should your sister give you the egg? Did you relinquish all rights to it genetic or not? Shouldn't your sister realise the bonds families have and in a way be able to return the favour considering the happiness your good turn brought into her life? Honestly there is no easy, conventional answer. It's not a clear cut yes or no and in this book Caroline Finnerty takes us on a journey challenging the connections between nature and nurture and I was fascinated by every aspect of this moving and meaningful story.

Isla Forde is nearing 39 and working as a waitress in a cafe. She is single but enjoys some nights now and again with cafe owner Greg with no real strings attached (maybe more so on her side rather than Greg's). Despite sleeping together often she has not gotten pregnant which has not bothered her really until now. Woken up regularly in the middle of the night by these dreams featuring a baby, is it Isla's biological clock ticking telling her she wants a baby? By day she can't stop thinking about babies and begins to feel a physical ache and a need to hold her own child in her arms. 'She had heard people describe it as a gnawing hole inside their tummies, pulling deep down into their groins, like a chain grounding them to earth that made them yearn for motherhood'. Isla to me seemed calm and reasonable, she clearly needed to satisfy this hunger and knowing she wasn't in a secure long term relationship she went to the doctor to get everything checked out and inquire about maybe using IVF or another method. On the other hand we have her sister Jo - a solicitor who does everything by the book is conscientious and a bit of a control freak when it comes to her daughter and also healthy living. Married to Ryan for some years are cracks beginning to appear in the once happy relationship?

Similar to Isla only 14 years previously Jo too longed for a baby and despite repeated attempts at IVF was unsuccessful. Isla stepped in and provided the eggs which in turn led to the traumatic birth of Réitlín the apple of Jo's eye. Réitlín does not know the truth but should she? Jo's view on it is 'Does it matter where the eggs come from as long as she could have a child?'. To me Isla performed the most selfless act and didn't question at all what she was doing instead seeing how her sister was struggling and by one kind act she made a family unit. But Irish law dictated that the egg donor relinquishes all rights to the baby and the birth is the legal mother despite the egg belonging to some else. This could become a thorny issue down the line if the child discovers the truth and wants to find their genetic mother. This whole concept begs the question are we messing with nature? Should we just let everything be and take it lying down that some people are not meant to have a baby naturally. As we all know there are thousands of children waiting around the world to be adopted and given a loving home. Yes this process may take longer but knowing several people who have adopted this is so rewarding.

Isla soon discovers she can't have a baby of her own naturally or through IVF and I so felt for her when the reasons why are explained. It's as if her one act of kindness now was her only chance and she gave it away so generously. You could feel her heart being ripped in two but ever the optimist she turns to Jo fully aware of the one embryo remaining in storage. Now the tables are turning and hopefully Jo can step up and support her sister. When Isla plucks up the courage and tells Jo of her plans and request she does not get the most forthcoming of reactions as Jo believes if Isla can barely support herself how on earth can she rear a child. To be honest I viewed Jo's reaction as just being totally selfish and all about herself and dare I say it she just came across as bloody ungrateful. After all Isla's made her sister's wish come true how can she not just be happy that now Isla wants to experience the same feelings Réitlín brought to Jo and Ryans life? Ok she may not have the most financially stable living situation but as long as you have love and some family support surely that is a start? Jo claims Isla is not responsible enough to parent single handedly. In a way was she thinking I tried for so long with my husband to get pregnant and now you as a single woman can be presented with options like a menu. Where is the justice in that?

I felt so sorry for Isla and what she then goes through with Jo and to also realise that something women take for granted can be snatched away in an instant 'It had sailed past her on a foggy day without so much as a flashing signal to warn her as she was left stranded on the shore'. What followed was a very interesting and impressive insight into a moral dilemma.

It states in the press release that this book will appeal to fans of Jodi Picoult and Diane Chamberlain, yes the subject matter is similar in its relevant but I think the above named authors have a more hard hitting style. Towards the end I felt it became too much about the past and was in danger of losing sight of the main plot but the final two or three chapters made me realise this was necessary and tied up the story well. There is definitely another book here or maybe even a novella but maybe the author feels it is best to leave things as they are. Either way *My Sister's Child* is a highly recommended read giving plenty of food for thought. Caroline Finnerty has ventured deeper with her writing and is confronting significant, pertinent issues. I for one am really liking this and already look forward to where she will take us to next.

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## **Joanne says**

*My Sister's Child* is one of the most thought-provoking books I have read in a while. *My Sister's Child* has at its centre a moral dilemma and it's difficult to talk about the book without revealing what that dilemma is! It is a very complicated situation ethically and one that will make you think about how you might feel if you were in the same position.

A strong theme of the book is that of nature versus nurture and you will consider this a lot as you read. As Isla's boss Greg says "It's complicated, that's for sure. Which is the real parent – the person a child shares their genes with or the person who raises the child?". Jo is a firm believer that nurture is what makes a person, not their genetic background. And yet, she and Isla are very different people even though they have the same nurturing as children. It is something I am not sure about. In general, I do believe that nurture is what makes a difference in the adults we become but then there are families where everyone seems totally different. It's certainly an interesting subject and one which even those who have studied it in depth can't agree on.

I thought this was a superb, well-crafted book. My emotions were all over the place along with the characters: anger, heartbreak, worry but ultimately hope. It's a compelling read and one that I am sure will make you think about your own experiences of parenthood, either as parent or child, and to what extent that

shaped you. I am sure you will also wonder what you might have done were you in either of the sisters' positions.

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## **Margaret Madden says**

.Sisters, Jo and Isla, are like chalk and cheese. Jo is the elder of the two. She is the responsible one. Always top of the class, ahead in her career, clever with finances and settled in her family life. Isla is flighty, carefree and unambitious. However, Jo owes her younger sister some credit for her perfect life. If it wasn't for Isla her life would be incomplete. Fourteen years ago, Isla gave her the most precious gift in the world. The chance to have a baby. With the help of her donated eggs, Jo and her husband managed to conceive their only child, Realtín. Their family unit complete, the sisters continue on their well worn paths, albeit in different directions. All this changes when Isla begins to dream of becoming a mother herself. Now she is the one with infertility problems and she needs her older sister to help her out. Tensions are fraught and the two women each believe they have all the answers. But do they?

The fourth novel from Irish author, Caroline Finnerty, this is a novel with one big decision at its core. Does one good favour deserve another? Is a mother the one who shares the child's DNA or the one who raises her? Does a child need to know how they were created? So many questions that have one meaning in legal terms and another in real life. The author uses two main protagonists as a way of examining this quandary. Jo is the high-flying, career woman that has devoted her life to being at the top of her game and micro-managing her family. Losing her mother at a young age, she spent most of her childhood looking out for her younger sister, whether she liked it or not. She still believes she knows best, and when asked to assist Isla in her fertility journey, she is not ready to compromise. Isla, on the other hand, has always felt like she was in Jo's shadow. Not academically gifted, she is more the arty type, and is quite content waiting tables in a local café. She doesn't see the need for a man in her life, a mortgage or all the other trappings of adulthood. She does have a longing for a child though, and feels her sister should help her out. The reader is given both sides of the story and the sister's dilemma becomes more about their past than their present. There are flashbacks to their difficult childhood and many insights into their opposite worlds.

Similar to a Jodi Picoult novel, this is a book that will have the reader wondering what they would do if in the same situation. Unfortunately there is no court case, which could have added some extra-zest, but with Irish law changing recently, this means the book won't date. Isla's long-term goals are not really an issue for her and most 39 year old women, considering pregnancy, would like to plan how becoming a mother would change their lives. But Isla is free-spirited and I'm sure we all know someone just like her. While Jo becomes an anti-heroine very quickly, further into the story we discover why she is so regimental and a tad bitter. Realtín is not the nicest teenager and it seems unlikely that she would not have a friend or two to confide in. No friends calling to the house, no mention of texts, snapchats or facetime. There is also a element of unhappiness in Jo's marriage that could be attributed to Jo's superiority complex and her need to control her daughter and their home life. Her husband, Ryan, never gets a chance to voice his unhappiness. There are many marriages like this, in the real world, and often the children side with the more 'fun' parent. The supporting characters are minimal, with Isla having her work colleagues to banter with but no such luck for Jo, who it seems has no adult companionship at all. This can also be the case for the full-time working mothers out there. Ryan seems to escape occasionally, but not Jo. No date nights for the couple either. All aspects of Jo's world that her daughter may not notice. Teenagers see what they want to see. While Isla's world looks like so much more fun than Jo's, looks can be deceiving.

Caroline Finnerty is well able to hold her own among the top female fiction writers, like Cathy Kelly and Sheila O'Flanagan. She knows how to use ordinary words to create moments of beauty. The mundane can be magnificent and she can transform the unstructured moments of a day into ripples of stunning sentences. While the pace is a little slow, there are some poetic moments which carry you through the opposing, yet connected, lives of two very different sisters. Much like real life...

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## **Sarah-Jane Francis says**

### **Interesting**

The story itself was very interesting all sorts of emotions going on although it did take me longer than usual to read a book i found myself in their world each time i picked it up to read

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## **Megan says**

### **Enjoyable**

This book was an enjoyable read about familial bonds and how the ones we love can also be those that cause us the most grief.

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## **Rachel Gilbey says**

My Sister's Child is a seriously impressive story, which will throw up all sorts of questions for the reader. In fact I suspect this could be a very good book group book, for that reason alone.

At the heart of the book there is the question of Nature vs Nurture, or who is really the parent. It deals with infertility and the various ways you can solve that, including donor eggs.

This is a story about a family, and mainly sisters Jo and Isla. Depending on who the focus was on, depends how they see their relationship, but Isla once did a completely selfless deed for Jo, and when she years later, asks for something similar, but that will bring up a lot of ancient history, and Jo is not sure she can bring herself to agree.

The sisters had a tough time as children, and various incidents in their past have had a real bearing on how they formed as adults, especially with regards to certain characteristics.

There are a lot of serious topics dealt with in this story, and its clear that Caroline Finnerty must have done a large amount of good research into them, in order to write about them so well. Everything is clear and concise, with a good turn of phrase, so you understand the moral and legalities of certain issues.

From what I have discovered after finishing the book, I believe that Caroline has used the latest laws that are coming into force in Ireland, regarding donor rights, so this will keep the book very relevant for a long while.

There was a huge disagreement during the majority of the book, which tears the family apart, and I really



couldn't decide who I was siding with. Both Jo and Isla's points of view were presented so well, that I had some empathy for both of them, as well as Ryan (Jo's husband) and their "Little Star" Réiltín.

There is no point me discussing the story with you in great detail, as I can't risk giving away something that could spoil your enjoyment of the book, but suffice to say, My Sister's Child will draw you in, and will affect a lot of people.

I found My Sister's Child to a fascinating look into family life, and the various issues it produces are dealt with appropriately and along with it there is a great story.

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### **Margaret says**

I thoroughly enjoyed this book from start to finish and in my opinion is this authors best to date. The characters were really well thought out, complex and sympathetic and the premise kept me on the edge of my seat for the entire book. On top of all that, it was beautifully written with some passages in particular making me almost reach for a pencil in order to underline them. That does not happen me a lot in contemporary fiction. Would highly recomend this book and hope to see many more from this author.

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### **Katrena says**

#### **Another gem**

I can't stand how amazing Caroline Finnerty is as a writer. I instantly fall in love with the characters and I miss them when the novel is complete. I have other authors on my reading list but I'll be downloading another Caroline Finnerty novel immediately.

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### **Sue says**

#### **So poignant and brilliant**

I felt like I was reading about my own childhood at times. I had a sister that died of cotdeath and very similar to my mam afterwards. How things have changed in Ireland since the 80s. I loved th

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