



# Goodbye Lemon

*Adam Davies*

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## **Goodbye Lemon** Adam Davies

A piercing and hilarious story about love, family, and redemption by the author of *The Frog King*.

Jack Tennant is going home. Against his better judgment, he has succumbed to his mother's guilt-laden pleas that he see his estranged father. Jack's do-gooder girlfriend believes that this trip is a chance for Jack to achieve peace with his family, but there's a lot she doesn't know about the Tennants. So Jack finds himself in the uncomfortable position of having to make a decision he's avoided for years. Should he walk away and leave his crazy family to solve their problems without him? Or should he try to mend fences that have been broken for as long as he can remember?

## **Goodbye Lemon Details**

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# From Reader Review Goodbye Lemon for online ebook

## Marsha says

“All happy families are alike but an unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion.” – “Anna Karenina”, Count Leo Tolstoy.

Adam Davies outlines in unflinching fashion the unhappiness of the Tennant family: Adair, the coldly emotionally repressed matriarch; Pressman, the alcoholic older brother, by turns bafflingly kind and ruthlessly vicious; Jack, wrongfully dismissed after being falsely accused of molesting a student; and Guilford Tennant, the savage patriarch reduced to a shadow of himself by “locked-in” syndrome, a condition that makes him incapable of movement except for one blinking eye. None of these characters are likeable but the story of their mutual bitterness, all centered around the mysterious death of Dexter the lost Tennant son makes for fascinating reading.

We are brought into searing contact with the pervasive and poisonous nature of guilt and the trickiness of memory. It's like a car crash—grotesque and sickening beyond belief yet you can't look away from it.

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## Juli says

This hooked me from the beginning, and not many books do that these days. It was unusual, but not outright odd. I had to look up some vocabulary words (adumbrate?) and sometimes I had to read a sentence a few times to get it, but I didn't resent that. There was a character whose description never quite clicked for me, but I didn't mind because I wasn't going to like her anyway.

A book about family, distorted memory, and revelations that more more than I expected from the blurb on the back cover. And thank goodness for impulse buys at used book stores (and an assignment to read a "book with a yellow cover"), because otherwise I never would have heard of this.

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## starfy says

while the story of the seriously dysfunctional tennant family is an entertaining, easy read, i can't help but feel like the author tried too hard. his word choice and metaphors seemed to be trying desperately to make literature out of a work of light fiction. aside from my beef with the author's vocabulary choices, i did enjoy this book - it made me laugh a few times, it made me roll my eyes at some of the more absurd plot twists, and it even made a few insightful statements that resonated with me.

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## Julie says

I feel like the author tried to hard to be clever and quirky, and it didn't quite land. The book was overly verbose - I mean, I like a challenge, but phrases like “Quickly I pour us some fortifactory coffee and made some unexemplary motions of self-preening, preparing myself for maternal contact” can be tiring to slog

through (that wasn't the worst one, either). Started out fine, but then it really started to drag when the protagonist went through a self-pitying decline, and the ending seemed really rushed. Also, the brothers talked about when their father died, they would get all the inheritance, but did they forget that their mother was still alive and kicking? Silly little detail, but things like that detracted from the story.

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### **Alicia says**

Goodbye Lemon is one of those edgy, contemporary novels. Think of it like a really depressed American Nick Hornsby novel (About A Boy). The main character, Jack Tennant, is called home when his father suffers a drinking related stroke. After the death of his brother when Jack was five his family fell apart, he and his brother blame his father for being drunk and not watching him, his mother has become a control freak and his father, has managed to stay perpetually drunk. Now the brother has descended into the same kind of drunkenness and has decided that the answer to their problems is for the two of them to kill their father.

Not surprisingly, Jack is affected by the craziness, starts drinking, drives his girlfriend away, loses the (not-so-great) job he has and in general falls apart. Don't worry, the end of the novel, is redemptive and he rebuilds his life in new and surprising ways.

I actually really liked this novel. If he would have ended up a drunk in the gutter it actually would have been a more interesting novel but I do like a bit of hope at the end of my literature.

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### **Alison says**

This is really more of a 3.5 (I'm trying to resist inflationary grading but a 3 is too low imo). At first I thought the book was going to be all cliché: a guy has never been home for 15 years in order to avoid his incredibly dysfunctional family, but his girlfriend convinces him to return home after his father suffers a major stroke and is unable to move or speak. He has always blamed his father for the death of his brother Dexter (this is not a spoiler since the first pages reveal how Dexter died). Most of the characters interested me and I liked how the conflict was resolved. A good read.

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### **Allison says**

Best work of fiction I have read in a long time. Captivating language along with an magnetic and compassionate story-line make this book just fantastic. The characters were raw, extremely real, and overflowing with exposed emotion. Tells the story of a man going home for the first time in 15 years with his girlfriend and re-discovering himself in the midst of a family crisis. Wonderful author.

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### **Davy says**

The second book from buddy and former creative writing professor Adam Davies. Had no idea it existed until Amazon.com helpfully recommended it to me. Being on a nonfiction kick at the time, I put it off for a

month or so, until I ran into Adam one night while working at Borders. Hadn't seen him in 4 years, hadn't heard from him in 3. Thought he was living in CA or NY. NY was right, but his girlfriend attends the UGA law school and he visits frequently. We made a date for the holidays...and I decided to read the new book post-haste.

It is perhaps even more autobiographical than Frog King...half of it takes place in an unnamed Athens, GA (5-Star Day, J & J, The Manhattan...all get mentions), and half in Baltimore, where he grew up. Story: Young man tries to mend ties and come to terms with a family that was destroyed by the drowning of a 6 year-old brother and son...and the subsequent alcoholism. There's more to it than that...the father is very sick, Jack's relationship with his girlfriend is in peril...but the highlight, I think, is the portrayal of the relationship between Jack and his brother, Press. More dazzling wordplay, Adam-style, doesn't hurt.

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### **Chris Horne says**

It was good, surprising at times and able to stir a few feelings thanks to sharing a little too much in common with the narrator, Jackson Tennant. Initially, I was turned off by the plot description (guy goes home for the first time in 15 years, crap happens) because it felt a little overdone, but I'd just finished Davies' latest book, *Mine All Mine*, and liked it. So I trusted the author and it paid off.

There's a lot going on between the Tennants and it starts with Jack's relationship with his father, Col. Guilford Tennant, who Jack blames for the death of his slightly older brother Dexter and his ruined dreams to be a concert pianist. His memories of Dex are fuzzy, shifting, almost assuredly wrong, and that drives him nuts. His oldest brother, Pressman, has lived at home well into his late-30s, done little more than drink. His mother is a control freak. And his girlfriend, Hahva, doesn't know about any of this but insists he go be with his family after his father has a stroke that leaves him paralyzed but otherwise completely conscious and aware.

Compared to *Mine All Mine*, this was a hard book to read. The humor was in shorter supply, though it worked when it was there, keeping this from being a melancholic mess. The story felt real even when you wanted to slap Jack upside the head. I read the last 100 pages in a single-sitting blur, which says something itself.

I'd recommend it.

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### **Xavier Guillaume says**

This book opened up the world of Lock-jaw Syndrome to me that I've never heard of, thus it was all rather remarkable. Not as funny as *Mine All Mine* or *Frog King*, but it definitely had its moments. Especially the father cruising around crashing into things on a pursuit to 'suicide?' Absolutely hilarious! The story was really well written though, and I loved it nonetheless.

If you want to read a story with a similar theme, there is another book called *The Butterfly and the Diving Bell*, it's actually a memoir of a man who lived with Lockjaw Syndrome. It's not exactly as light-humored, but it's equally as enlightening, maybe a bit more due to its serious nature.

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## Mike says

Wow, what a find.

I read "Mine, All Mine" by Davies and liked it enough to pick up another book by him. "Mine, All Mine" was a high-priced rent-a-cop with super senses' delightful romp through a world of art theft. It did not leave me prepared for "Goodbye Lemon" as a follow-up.

Davies is the kind of author that makes me embarrassed of all the nothing I've accomplished. Reading his books is like listening to Van Halen and thinking "Why didn't I ever learn to wail on the guitar?" remember that book you read when you were 13 and it made you feel that one way about that important thing? This book brought back that feeling to me at 30.

Seven pages in, I thought: "Can he keep this up for an entire book? And if he can, can I handle it?"

The answers: yes and barely, respectively.

I think this is a book for boys. It touches on too many male-oriented themes and issues (including a favorite of mine TAPOB: The Amazing Power Of Brotherhood) for it to really click with a girl. Or maybe not, that's opinion, only.

Ladies, if you do read this, keep your tear-mopping handkerchiefs at the ready.

Everyone, boy or girl, bring your dictionary. Davies seems to have a real love for language and occasionally likes to show off.

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## J.T. says

I picked this book up at a thrift-store in Georgia out of desperation (I'd finished the book I bought with me and still had a few days left of my visit), based solely on the comparisons to other authors I like on the back cover blurb (Nick Hornby, Dave Eggers).

The comparisons are actually pretty accurate, and I ended up really enjoying this book. It didn't grab me at first, but once I'd gotten about halfway in I was hooked. I ended up reading the last third or so in one sitting despite desperately needing to get sleep (my kids wake up early).

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## Jessica says

I loved Davies' *The Frog King* when I was in high school, likely because I aspired to his vocabulary and apparently had extremely low standards for writing styles. I read a few pages of it again recently and was quite confused as to why I had forced my friends and family to read such a crap book.

Now I'm also confused as to why I requested Davies' next book, *Goodbye Lemon* from the library. And why I read 114 pages of it before giving up. Short chapters with trite titles, endless adjectives, and an overreaching vocabulary this book shares with Davies' first effort. He tries to make richly detailed scenes with lists so boring I skip over them. Describing his parents' billiards room, made over by the narrator's father's home health care nurse: "There is a battalion of scented lotions, swabs, a pincushion hosting a single pin, some prehensile rubber apparatus, inflatable balls of various sizes, a walkie-talkie with a red light glowing perched above the cot, multicolored sponges, a bucket, coffee-sized canister of something called Thick-It, a logspill of straws, a minifridge, a bungee cord, an electric device that looks like a princess phone,

and lots of medications in orange cylinders." And there's more where that came from.

It's part of my new year's resolution to put down books that aren't worth my time, so this crap is the first in my "couldn't-finish" shelf. Hopefully I'll choose better in the future and keep this shelf short.

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### **Abigail Hillinger says**

This book is gut-wrenching. No other cliché can describe it as accurately.

If I gave anything away about this book, I'll give it all away because it connects beautifully at the end.

The gist? A man (Jack) returns home to his long-estranged family because his social-worker girlfriend (Hahva) forces him to. Why? Because Jack's alcoholic/abusive father has locked-in syndrome, a form of paralysis that leads him unable to do anything but blink his eyes...and that's just barely. And then there's Jack's mother, a cold WASP, and one of Jack's brothers, a man stuck in deep alcoholism. And of course, there's Dexter, aka Lemon, the little brother who died tragically when Jack was five...and nobody in the family will talk about it.

A predictable plot-line, one assumes, but Davies takes a one-dimensional theme of estranged/dysfunctional family and makes it heartfelt and sincere.

It's not a book to pick up and read at any random page... it takes a cover to cover dedication. And there are moments where it's rough for the reader. But again, worth it. Very much worth it.

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### **Chris says**

I know I read it. I don't remember much.

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