



## A Wild Ride Up the Cupboards

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Edward is nearly four years old when he begins his slow, painful withdrawal from the world. For those who love him -- his father, Jack, and mother, Rachel, pregnant with their third child -- the transformation of their happy, intelligent firstborn into a sleepless, feral stranger is a devastating blow, one that brings enormous ramifications not just for Edward and his parents, but also for their younger son, Matt, and soon-to-be-born daughter.

*A Wild Ride Up the Cupboards* follows this nuclear family as Rachel and Jack try to come to terms with their son's descent into autism (or something like it) and struggle to sustain their marriage under this unanticipated strain. Threaded through the novel, too, is the story of Rachel's deceased uncle Mickey, who may have suffered from a similar disorder at a time when parenting, pediatrics, and ideas about child psychology were entirely different from today's. As Rachel delves into her own family history in search of answers, flashbacks to Mickey's life afford moving insight into the nature of childhood disorders and the coping mechanisms of different families.

A spellbinding, brilliantly nuanced portrait of a marriage and a family, this compelling drama also poses provocative, real-life questions: How much should a mother sacrifice for her children? How much intervention is too much? When do parents' ambitions for their offspring become counterproductive, even destructive? Who should decide what is best for the child? Is it ever worth sacrificing a marriage for a child? *A Wild Ride Up the Cupboards* is a carefully crafted, compulsively readable, emotional page-turner that reveals a remarkable gift for language and storytelling and enormous insight into the complexities and dilemmas of domestic life and parenthood. It is a striking exploration of love, faith, and sacrifice that will resonate with readers everywhere.

## A Wild Ride Up the Cupboards Details

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Author : Ann Bauer

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## **From Reader Review A Wild Ride Up the Cupboards for online ebook**

### **Julie says**

A fairly good book about a family with a son who has autistic-like qualities, but he is not autistic. It covers many years in this family's life in a believable way. I could relate to the mother, who had a strong protective love for her not-normal son. The struggles were dealt with in a realistic way.

There are chapters dealing with the boy's grandparents family in the 50s and 60s. Maybe this was to show there was a medical/genetic explanation for the boy's problems. Not sure, because it really doesn't link the two.

The beginning of the book was very good, lots of detail, and well written. As it went on, years were skipped over and by the end, the boy is going into high school, with very little to explain the years missed. I was not satisfied with the lack of a good ending to this story.

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### **Ellie Contursi says**

This was one of those books where you think 'what else could happen to this poor family'. A really poignant story of a family's struggles with a child who was never really diagnosed with a syndrome or disease. Edward is a healthy baby and toddler but when he turns 4 he develops autistic-like symptoms but does not have autism. This is the story of how the parents cope with such a frustrating, odd and curious 'syndrome'. Ann Bauer is an excellent writer. I also loved "The Forever Marriage" her most recent novel.

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### **Brian says**

This book started out as a possible 5 star, then quickly lost stars as I went through it. The premise is that a child may or may not be autistic. The story is told through the eyes of the mother, but contained flashbacks to a relative who also may have been autistic. I ended up realizing about 100 pages in that I didn't care at all about the flashback character, nor did I end up caring about the main characters as well. I did enjoy this author's writing style however.

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### **Priscilla Andreiev says**

#### **Compelling, but slow going**

A very realistic view of the slogging work of marriage and child rearing, complicated by the heart wrenching obstacles of a disabled child. This book tells the story of two boys from different generations who have undiagnosed mental/psychological disabilities from early childhood and the terrible struggle the boys themselves and their families face trying to achieve some level of normality. One step forward then two steps back is the theme throughout most of the book. The only reason I gave a four-star rating instead of five, is

because the skipping from one generation to the next is confusing and distracting. Perhaps a more careful second reading would eliminate this drawback.

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### **Robin says**

Highly disappointing, especially considering how wonderfully written Ann Bauer's columns are on Salon.com and which provide much of the drafting of this story. Bauer's use of a literary device of alternating between the narrator's present-day circumstances of a young marriage to an ultimately inappropriate man, coping with a child "somewhere on the scale of autism", and two other, younger, children; and the story of the narrator's uncle who (may) have suffered a similar developmental and emotional impairment is less than adroit, distracting and results in uneven character and plot development. Without providing a spoiler I will say this: the radical decision the parents reach to cope with their son's affliction and insomnia and the ultimate unraveling of their lives is not believeable (not so much the decision itself, or the circumstances that drove them; but the mechanics and final end are frankly preposterous and happen so quickly that they feel tacked on. Baur's story-telling is more evident in her journalistic writing than her fiction.

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### **Laurel-Rain says**

This book is a fictional chronicle of one family's struggle—to discover what is causing son Edward's strange withdrawal that began at the age of four, and what, if anything, can be done to correct/cure his problems.

Throughout the story, narrated in the first person by the mother, Rachel, we peek into their world, from their courtship and unusual beginnings as a couple, followed by their almost perfect life as a young family until one day when their world turned upside down.

We accompany them to doctor's visits; we see them through the eyes of strangers who look askance at them and at their son; we share a bit of their loneliness and isolation as their world becomes increasingly smaller, until finally, there is nothing left except the day-to-day coping.

Interspersed with this narrative are the chapters that flash back to the past and to various family members, some of whom also exhibited "odd" behaviors.

In their search for answers, they even peruse old letters between an Uncle Mickey and his sister, always hoping to find a clue.

How one family's focus on one child's troubles and elusive diagnosis completely shapes and alters their lives forever is the ultimate story here.

Longing for solutions and answers, I kept plodding along, fascinated by this family's persistence and courage—and then at the end, I was surprised by the inevitable conclusion.

A Wild Ride Up the Cupboards: A Novel is an unforgettable story that gives new meaning to the word "cope." Five stars.

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### **Heidi O'mara says**

Wow. This book is great. It makes you really think about your children, how you see them...should I accommodate that behavior, embrace it, fix it??? Do all the ideoesyncrasies add up to a disorder or is it a phase...? I don't want to gloss over the issues in this book, Edward has serious problems and his parents love him sincerely and are desperate to try whatever they can to help him. The desire to figure Edward out and "fix it," how this process takes over their lives, is the undoing of this marriage. A very compelling read.

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### **Marie says**

<http://mariesbookgarden.blogspot.com/...>

I love the title of Bauer's debut novel. It is a term used to describe the protagonist's uncle and the way his older brother would play with him until he died suddenly of scarlet fever.

At the center of this book is Edward, a boy who begins to withdraw at age four. His mom, Rachel, and dad, Jack, try to figure out what is happening to him...it seems like autism, but it isn't...and they resort to extreme lengths to try to help him.

Rachel also discovers that her uncle, Mickey, who died before she was born, had similarities to young Edward. Bauer alternates her chapters between Rachel's story and that of Mickey, whose life changed dramatically when his beloved older brother died.

Many readers have found it jarring to go back and forth between perspectives, and often I dislike that as well...but I didn't have a problem with it in this book. In fact, I liked the parts about Mickey.

My qualms about the book were that I found it difficult to relate to the parents and their choices...I found their anguish about their son's situation to be touching and tragic, but at the same time I felt that Bauer skimped on describing what drew them together and what they were like as human beings. This story is apparently based on Bauer's own life (one of her sons went through a similar type of withdrawal, and she too was scammed by the Israeli mafia!), and she writes of great fondness for the character Jack. However, I've never known anyone like Jack and I found it hard to understand how someone could be in love with such a person.

The end felt vaguely unsatisfying. Whatever became of Edward (and Bauer's own son)? Did they ever discover what was wrong with him? Did Rachel even care about her marriage? (For even though Bauer says Jack was her favorite character, I didn't sense that with Rachel.)

Bauer effectively describes the anxiety and feelings of loss for a parent who has a child with special needs. I could relate when Rachel became angry and envious at the easy success of "normal" children, or when her best friend's cat dies and the friend compares that to the loss of a child. This novel contained many moments of poignancy and effectiveness. I wish I had felt more fondness for the characters.

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### **Beth Peninger says**

I got through this book much faster than I anticipated. At times you almost forget it is fiction as Bauer's descriptions of Edward's "disability" and how it affects his family makes it feel like it is a memoir and not a novel.

Rachel and Jack have a beautiful son who one day, very suddenly, becomes a different person. He withdraws, quits speaking, etc. All very symptomatic of autism and yet it isn't. This book is the story of Edward's effect on Rachel and Jack as parents and as spouses. In the mix, as Rachel is searching for possible answers to Edward's "disability" she discovers things about her family that were never revealed.

It's a moving book. You feel Rachel's anguish as a mother, Jack's frustration as a father, and the strain of their marriage as they seek answers. On the back jacket of the book the last quoted review says something to the effect that the person put it down when finished with a sense of loss. I absolutely agree. The book ends and I feel so sad for the whole family, I especially relate to Rachel since I am a mother myself. But the whole family carries with them the aftershocks and the waves ripple throughout the years. There is a very real sense of loss.

While the book is fiction it is also much like a "handbook" for parents who have gone or are going through similar circumstances. Ann Bauer relates very well to the feelings, fears, and desperate search for answers that parents will go through for their children.

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### **Janet says**

I liked this book a lot. I grew to appreciate the writer's style, that at times seemed like flat reporting to me. But, the character of the narrator in the story is a reporter and from the mid-west; also the story involves autism, so it's really cleverly appropriate. This character describes the puzzle of autism from the perspective of an autistic person's devoted imperfect advocate; someone who can focus on the person within, and interpret the obvious confusion as best they can, which is imperfect too. Usually, confusion dominates a story like this one, but here, the rippling effects of love are exposed.

P.S. I read somewhere that the author loves her husband-character in the story. He is a portrayed as a wounded and beautiful soul.

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### **Diane Ramirez says**

I don't think I've read anything by before (she's written for Salon, I believe Atlantic Monthly, and other publications) but this book really wowed me and made me want to read some more. *A Wild Ride Up the Cupboards* is apparently a novel version of her personal experiences raising a family of three, including one son with autistic tendencies. It's a beautifully written, poetic, yet oftentimes nightmarish look into ways that families with atypical children have to struggle to remain functioning loving and productive elements of society. And a fearless portrayal of how this mother's love for her son was made more fiercely protective as he became more "different".

There were a few threads to this story that were left loosely hanging, nagging threads that I so wanted her to revisit. While I really wish the novel had closed all the open doors and windows and given us a satisfying ending, perhaps that's too much to ask when one writes about real lives.

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### **Jeanne Werth says**

This one was kind of outside of my normal read, but I couldn't put it down. Cute family with lots of issues just doing the best they can. Really good read!!

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### **Meghan Dymock says**

By the end of this book I was scanning the pages to just get the gist of it. If I had to hear one more time about how tall Jack is (six six) or how large his hands are I would have screamed. It started out great but by the end I was wondering what the point of the book was....Maybe it was to tell me how tall Jack was? I ended up frustrated with the way the characters seemed to never get anywhere other than where we knew from the beginning: Jack was a drifter hippie who would leave his family. Bleh.

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### **Sue says**

This was a great book that addresses what it's like to have a disabled child and how frustrating and difficult it can be to find the right treatment and education for him. Doctors are stumped, friends and relatives do not understand and the school system is anything but supportive. Desperate parents will do desperate things and the consequences of Rachel and Jack's choices will change their family forever.

I could empathize with Rachel's deal with God. At one point, a doctor suggests her son might have a disfiguring degenerative disease that causes brain tumors. Rachel tells God she'll give up everything she has (marriage, friends, home, job) if God will just make Edward not have that dreaded disease. She just wants to keep all 3 of her children healthy. Later on as her life changes and she does indeed start to lose some of these things, she realizes she "should have been more specific with God." Edward did not have the terrible degenerative disease but he still has something (probably an unusual form of autism) that makes living with him and helping him grow into a functioning adult very difficult. If she was going to sacrifice so much, she should have gotten a perfectly normal Edward, not the loveable but difficult child she still has.

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### **Jenni says**

I chose this book because I believed it to be the story of a family and their struggles dealing with an autistic child. I can relate to this topic so I was interested in reading it. It ended up being a lot different than I expected.

First of all, the child is not autistic. This makes a big difference in how the child is treated and the possibilities for his future. For example, since they can't diagnose him, there is a possibility of there being a cure. Secondly, the book is not really about a family as much as it is about a mother. It tells the story of her dealing with all the trials life brings her. It was much more than just a disabled son. She dealt with poverty, disappointment, critical (but loving) parents, and a husband that is lacking in ambition.

The story starts at a time in her life where she makes some critical choices that will effect her significantly later on. It then goes through a period of flashbacks, stories of an uncle she had, and progresses forward as well. This sounds really confusing, but I thought the author pulled the transitions off really well.

As I read the story, I cringed at their choices. I laughed at their situations. I frowned at the way others had a negative effect in their lives... but while I couldn't really relate to this woman (which is what I expected to do when I chose this novel,) I definately became attached to her.

All in all, it was a good book. I thought it was definately worth the read.

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