

Off Target

Eve Smith

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One mistake shakes the foundations of a family in Eve Smith's domestic thriller *Off Target*.

In a society where IVF is the norm, Susan and her husband have been trying to conceive the old-fashioned way for years. Susan's husband will not consent to any screening or testing. Intimacy no longer feels intimate. When Susan engineers a scene to recapture the spark and her plan backfires, she escapes to a concert to stave off her disappointment.

Weeks later, Susan is surprised, elated, and terrified to discover she is pregnant with someone else's child. Knowing that her husband will accept no child but his own, Susan makes a decision. With a firm understanding of the known risks, desperation bordering on panic, and a pushy best friend, Susan goes forward with an experimental procedure that takes correcting genes for hereditary illnesses a few steps farther.

The first half of the book focuses on Susan's attempts to get pregnant, her relationship with her husband, and her decision to alter her unborn child's genetic code. The book tempers the breathless tension between Susan's happiness and terror with descriptions of the size of the fetus, much like a pregnancy app, and interstitial advertisements and articles about genetic modifications.

In the second half, the narrative shifts to share the load between Susan and her preteen daughter, Zurel. Its alternating chapters trade between Susan's anxiety about her daughter's well-being and Zurel's confusion and frustration with her perceived differences. A sense of foreboding and menace permeates the book: society at large struggles with the effects of genetic tampering; and Susan's secret maneuverings are exposed, endangering more than just her marriage.

Off Target is a thrilling novel examining genetics and personhood. It offers a different kind of answer to the question of nature versus nurture.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (July / August 2022)

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