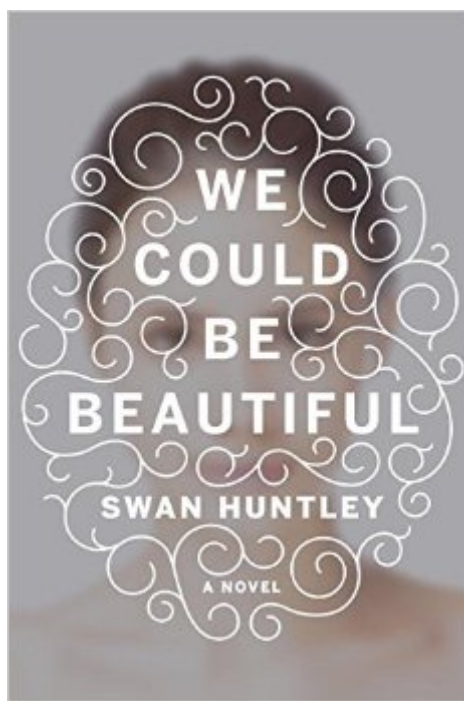


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We Could Be Beautiful: A Novel



Synopsis

A spellbinding psychological debut novel, Swan Huntley's *We Could Be Beautiful* is the story of a wealthy woman who has everything—and yet can trust no one. Catherine West has spent her entire life surrounded by beautiful things. She owns an immaculate Manhattan apartment, she collects fine art, she buys exquisite handbags and clothing, and she constantly redecorates her home. And yet, despite all this, she still feels empty. She sees her personal trainer, she gets weekly massages, and occasionally she visits her mother and sister on the Upper East Side, but after two broken engagements and boyfriends who wanted only her money, she is haunted by the fear that she'll never have a family of her own. One night, at an art opening, Catherine meets William Stockton, a handsome man who shares her impeccable taste and love of beauty. He is educated, elegant, and even has a personal connection—his parents and Catherine's parents were friends years ago. But as he and Catherine grow closer, she begins to encounter strange signs, and her mother, Elizabeth (now suffering from Alzheimer's), seems to have only bad memories of William as a boy. In Elizabeth's old diary she finds an unnerving letter from a former nanny that cryptically reads: "We cannot trust anyone . . ." Is William lying about his past? And if so, is Catherine willing to sacrifice their beautiful life in order to find the truth? Featuring a fascinating heroine who longs for answers but is blinded by her own privilege, *We Could Be Beautiful* is a glittering, seductive, utterly surprising story of love, money, greed, and family.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I really enjoyed reading the debut novel *We Could Be Beautiful* by Swan Huntley. For those considering this book, it should be noted, that it is not a sexy thriller as described. Instead, I would classify it as an in-depth character study, of a very, very wealthy 43 year old Manhattanite named Catherine West. Catherine has an 80 thousand dollar a month trust fund and all the luxuries that one could ever long for. Catherine owns a card shop where she gives artists an avenue in which to display their talents, which she occasionally visits when she can find time in-between her excessive shopping, nail/hair appointments, masseuse and the decorating on her 2 million dollar home. Catherine has a younger sister who wants them to be closer and a once elegant albeit dispassionate mother, who is now diagnosed with Alzheimer Disease. Catherine is totally out of touch with reality and extremely spoiled, yet her naivete and acerbic wit make for a rather unique character and some very funny observations. Catherine has it all, however, deep down knows that something is missing. She finds that missing piece of the puzzle, when she meets the older, handsome and debonaire William Stockton at an art show. Their wealthy families use to be on friendly terms years ago and Catherine is convinced that he is the ONE. It is understandably a shock that others in her life do not feel the same way. Especially her mother, who appears uncomfortable and has negative comments, when his name is mentioned to her. If Catherine is honest with herself, which she tries never to be, as the couple move in together, become engaged and set a wedding day, there is definitely something amiss, with this too good to be true dream man.

Was this intended to be part satire? Part social commentary? Or to be read as a straightforward suspense novel? I never really sorted that out to my own satisfaction, and the question kept intruding as I read Catherine West's reflections on her own privileged life, including her irritation on the day that her housekeeper -- after gaining too much weight due to a thyroid problem -- couldn't finish all the work in a single day. The housekeeper suggests that Catherine hire a second cleaner to share the work, but Catherine -- the lucky recipient of \$80,000 in a monthly income from a family trust -- recoils in horror at the idea of paying two people. She fires the cleaner, but suggests sweetly that maybe this will be her chance to get an office job where she can sit down all day, and tips her \$100. The housekeeper leaves, pointing out that she's an undocumented immigrant...And yet Catherine West, who narrates this novel, tells us earnestly that "I was a really good person" who volunteers at a soup kitchen, who gives money to homeless people on the street, who votes and recycles. She collects art. She even runs a small business! (Even though it loses money...) She prides herself on being a good sister (even though Caroline, her sister, actually seems to drive her crazy.) But she feels incomplete without a husband and a child, and now that she's 42, well, time is

running out. Then suddenly she meets the man who is apparently perfect for her: with a pedigree just like her own and tastes to match. Their parents even knew each other way back when! So what if the sex isn't great? So what if he doesn't like to talk about the past? Catherine drowns any signs of anxiety -- including ignoring the hostility of her Alzheimer's afflicted mother -- and races toward the altar for a third time.

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