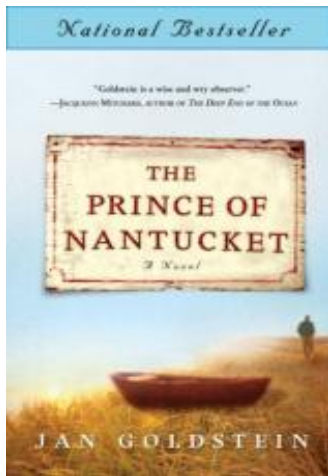


The Prince of Nantucket

by Jan Goldstein



About the Book

"I could never be a good father because I turned my back on being your son." Perhaps Teddy Mathison is right when he makes this heart-wrenching confession to his dying mother, but is it really too late? The touching and surprising answer unfolds in this richly layered, tender story of a man who is primed to go far in life, but first must find his way home.

Teddy is a successful Los Angeles lawyer whose charm and formidable political skills have made him the leading candidate in the race to become the new U.S. senator from California. But behind the golden public persona lie some darker truths: his teenage daughter, Zoe, has barely spoken to him since his divorce from her mother and he has long been bitterly estranged from his own mother, a world-renowned painter. So when his sister asks Teddy to come back to Nantucket to spend some time with their ailing mother before Alzheimer's steals her mind entirely, Teddy balks. But his campaign manager sees the perfect opportunity for a mother-son photo op that will jack up his weak family values poll numbers, and Teddy reluctantly agrees to the trip.

Once on Nantucket, Teddy is forced to confront feelings he'd long repressed. As he struggles with his mother's illness and his daughter's disdain, he learns some stunning truths about the father he once idolized and the shocking extent of his daughter's pain. And when he meets a woman who challenges everything he thought he understood about relationships, he unexpectedly finds the life he never knew he wanted.

Discussion Guide

1. At the opening of the novel, Judith tells Teddy that he isn't made for relationships. What do we learn about him early on that would give this statement validity?
2. How does Zoe view her father? What do you feel adolescent girls want most in a father?

- 3.** At the Even Keel café on Nantucket, Zoe sets up rules for Teddy regarding women. What are they? What do these rules say, if anything, about how Zoe might want to be treated?
- 4.** Teddy blames his mother for some terrible act that altered his life. And yet it gradually becomes evident that he admires her for several traits. What are they and why are they important to Teddy?
- 5.** We come to see that the old family friend and caretaker, Frank, has an unrequited love. What advice does this cause him to give Teddy? There are other characters in the novel who possess love that has gone unrequited, as well as parts of themselves that have gone unfulfilled. Identify them and discuss what those unrequited or unfulfilled aspects are for each character.
- 6.** How does Zoe express her pain? What other ways do people, young and old, use to express or bury that in life that most hurts them?
- 7.** Why do you feel the author set this story on an island? Are there other kinds of islands in this novel?
- 8.** Within this story, art plays a major role in healing and expressing one's identity. The author's own mother was a poet who, at the end of her life, suffered from Alzheimer's. He has said that he and other family members were able to communicate with her through the use of poetry. What was there about art that allowed Teddy to "unlock" Kate's memory? Do you feel art, and other forms of creative expression, might unlock parts of ourselves we don't normally reach? Discuss how this could be applied to your life or the lives of those you love.
- 9.** Kate initially becomes frustrated in trying to once again paint under Teddy's guidance. What does her "handprint" signify to her and to Teddy? Imagine you are Teddy watching his mother paint again. Describe your emotions.
- 10.** Liza has, herself, experienced tragedy. What does she say one must do with that pain in order to move on? Discuss the ways in which you or those you love have moved through difficult or tragic times. What or who helped you? What do you do with the pain?
- 11.** Zoe takes a photograph that stuns Teddy when Liza shows it to him. What was the subject of the photo and what did it tell Teddy about the way his daughter sees herself?
- 12.** Clearly, Zoe was keeping a secret from her parents. Would your child or grandchild be able to keep such a secret from you? What do we hide from those we love and why do we do it?
- 13.** Gradually, the campaign back in California diminishes in importance in Teddy's eyes, replaced by concerns about the three women he is dealing with on Nantucket. Discuss how each of these female characters alters him in some way. Are there women (or men) who have changed the way in which you see yourself and the world?
- 14.** Why did Kate keep such a secret from Teddy? How did learning the truth change his view of his father and mother? How does he create a second chance for him and his mother? Discuss the importance of second chances in your own life and that of those you are close to.
- 15.** Do you agree with Liza's assessment that the Teddy we come to know at the end of the story would make a very

different candidate should he ever decide to run again? How so?

16. The author has said he wanted to depict a character "rediscovering the artist in himself." Do you believe there is an artist (however you interpret that) inside each of us?

17. What emotions does Kate's final request of her son generate in you? How would you have responded?

18. Discuss Teddy's decision in regard to his mother's stunning last request and contrast his willingness to give up control and allow his mother her own choice. What is the author saying about love in this final act?

Author Bio

A native New Englander, Jan Goldstein graduated with honors from the University of Vermont, garnering at that time a national award for his original musical *Covenant* from Broadcast Music, Inc. Jan went on to study in Jerusalem where he experienced first-hand the Yom Kippur war and its aftermath. Returning to the States, he went on to receive his Master's Degree and graduate awards for writing and public speaking.

Jan has penned a film on Einstein for Jon Voight and HBO and is the author of two works of nonfiction: **Life Can Be This Good** and **Sacred Wounds**. An award-winning poet, playwright, and screenwriter, Jan has been honored nationally by Johns Hopkins University and the U.S. Secretary of Education for his accomplishments.

As a human rights activist, Jan has spoken from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and at the Vietnam War Memorial. In addition, Jan has been named to the honorary board of A Place Called Home, a youth facility in South Central Los Angeles, along with Will and Jada Pinkett Smith and founder Debrah Constance.

For years, Jan was a single dad raising three young children, a challenging and exciting time during which he acquired invaluable experience, amongst which was the art of buying a training bra and learning to cook a Thanksgiving meal from scratch.

He continues to play rock music as he once did with his teen band, loves biking in Nantucket with his three-year-old daughter aboard, has a passion for chasing sunsets with his wife, and still believes the best maple syrup comes from Vermont.

Jan lives with his wife, Bonnie, a clinical psychologist, and their family in Los Angeles.

Critical Praise

"Recalls another Massachusetts dynasty—a clan of wild boys with political dreams and personal demons. Novelist Jan Goldstein is a wise and wry observer of what has changed beneath the face of American governance, and what never will."

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