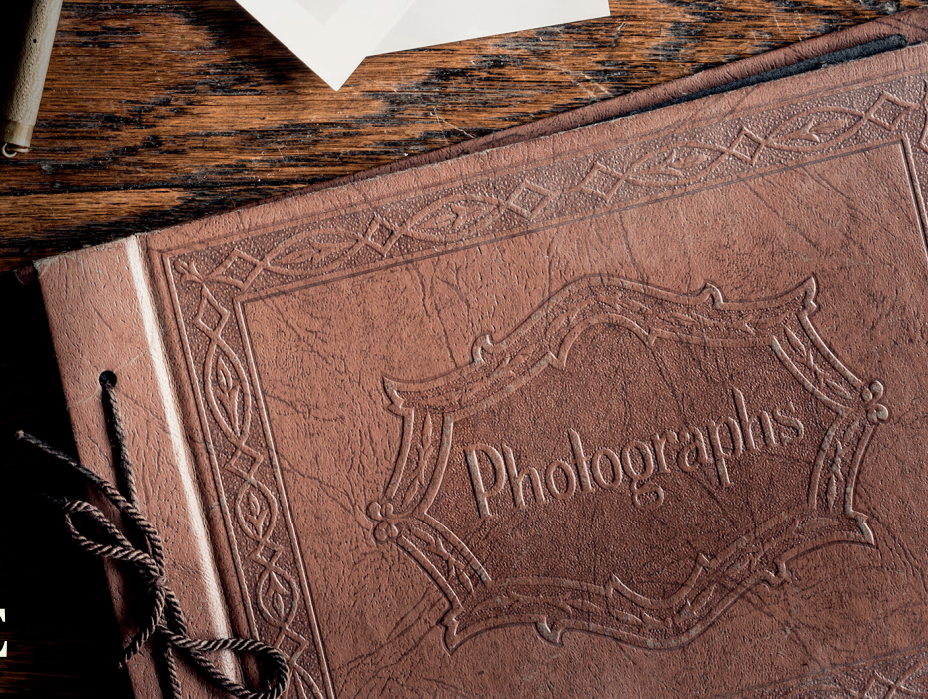


I'LL BE SEEING YOU

A Memoir

New York Times bestselling author of
The Story of Arthur Truluv

ELIZABETH BERG



READING GROUP GUIDE

A NOTE FROM ELIZABETH BERG

Dear Reader,

I'll Be Seeing You is a diary of my parents' decline. When I experienced them losing power and independence, as well as the home they were loath to leave (to the extent that I did; since I was the faraway daughter, my sister did nearly all the heavy lifting), I learned a lot about them—and just as much about myself.

I learned that the frustration and anger that come up in these situations go both ways: you're frustrated and/or angry with your parents, and they're frustrated and/or angry with you. I saw how deep the despair can be in realizing that you can no longer properly care for yourself, but I also saw how accepting the love and help that are offered can foster a whole new level of appreciation and understanding between parents and children. I learned that in the middle of what can feel like a gigantic, painful mess, there can suddenly be the saving grace of humor, or the salve of a certain kind of insight.

I also learned that I am at the in-between place, having cared for my parents and now soon to need help from my own children, no doubt. I'm not yet *old*, but I'm certainly getting there, and I am more aware every day of what can befall me, my partner, and my friends—all of whom, I think, still feel inside like the girls or boys they used to be. So when I consider the story of my parents' failing, I am picking up stones on the path to put into my pocket. I hope what I learned from them will help me and my children.

But I have to say that the biggest thing I learned in caring for my parents is that their life together, despite its hardships and frustrations, was a love story—deeply, wholly, and completely. It was the kind of love story you hardly ever see or hear about anymore. I was privileged to bear witness to it. I am bearing witness to it still.

I am thrilled that you have chosen to read and chat about *I'll Be Seeing You* with your book club. Read on for questions to help guide your discussions, as well as additional photos of my parents.

Best wishes,
Elizabeth Berg

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did this book prompt you to think about your own parents? What advice or insight will you use in your own life?
2. In what ways are generational differences in marriage and the roles of husband and wife shown in the book? Were there aspects of Berg's parents' marriage you found admirable, or any that you didn't?
3. How does Berg say that her parents' marriage has impacted her relationships? Has your romantic life been impacted by your parents? If so, how?
4. Why do you think Berg's parents are so reluctant to move into an assisted living facility? How do they attempt to find the balance between safety and comfort, and independence?
5. How does Berg explore sibling relationships throughout the book?
6. How do Berg and her family members find hope and humor despite their father's deterioration?
7. Berg is at times impatient with her parents and says things she regrets. Why do you think she includes these moments instead of painting a rosier picture of their relationship?
8. How do economic concerns impact Berg's ability to care for her parents? What does this say about our elder care systems and who has access to them?
9. How are the roles of parent and child blurred and reversed in the book? Why might that be especially frustrating for Berg's father?
10. Did reading *I'll Be Seeing You* give you any ideas about how you might best treat your parents as they age, such as what kinds of things to do or avoid?
11. In what ways do our relationships with our parents change as we age? How has your relationship with your parents evolved throughout your life?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (continued)

12. What does Berg mean when she says, “If someone is diagnosed with Alzheimer’s they leave long before they leave.”?
13. What criticisms are presented about navigating elder care in our country? What can we do to improve quality of life for elderly American citizens?
14. How is the importance of home stressed? How do the characters develop emotional connections to the spaces they inhabit?
15. The author says she had reservations about publishing this memoir because it’s so personal. Do you think there’s a benefit to publishing a true account instead of a fictionalized one?



Buying my dad a Cadillac



My parents in their youth



Reading with my mother