



Lump

a film based on the novel by

nathan whitlock



Can a single day of rash decisions tear apart a family?

Lump is a claustrophobic domestic story that exposes the ugly inner life of "domestic bliss" for couple Cat and Donovan, a set of privileged urbanites with two children, a gorgeous house, great jobs, and a seemingly picture perfect life. Their lives spectacularly fall apart after a devastating day for Cat, who discovers an unwanted third pregnancy, that she has cancer, and that her husband is a creep in both his personal and professional life.

OVERVIEW

On the surface, it seems like Cat is living the ideal middle-class life, with two kids, a husband, and a beautiful old house on a tree-lined street in Toronto. But below the surface, she is frustrated by being a stay-at-home mom, with her husband's deceptions, and with the mounting financial pressure of maintaining that beautiful house. So when she discovers not only that she is pregnant for the third time, but that her husband committed a heinous act in front of the young immigrant cleaning lady, and that the lump in her breast is a malignant tumour, her life falls apart. And so does she: she responds to this triple shot of bad news by running from her life and family, into the protection of an elderly charismatic yoga teacher and health guru, who hides Cat away for months.

The ripple effect of the terrible decisions made by Cat and her husband destabilize the lives of their kids, and of many of the people in their orbit – including their former cleaning lady, who is left trying to rebuild her own life.





Overview cont'd

What results is a darkly comedic story about power and privilege and the comforting lies people tell themselves. *Lump* is a powerful story for the post-#MeToo and post-Trump era, when we are shown, again and again, that the people who mean well and who sound thoughtful and empathetic often make the worst possible choices.

Though *Lump* is not an autobiographical story, it is deeply informed by the author's experiences as someone from a working-class family, as a parent (to three children), and as a cancer survivor—as well as someone who has lost friends and colleagues to cancer.



PLOT SYNOPSIS

Cat is a middle-aged mother of two who has mostly put her professional career on pause to take care of her two young children (Isabella and Silas), though she does some freelance web design work. She is unhappy in her career, and in her status as a stay-at-home mom. She is also experiencing ongoing health issues, with strange pains and lumps in her breasts. She is also worried because her period is late, though she is afraid to take a pregnancy test. (Because she just doesn't want to know.)

She is also unhappy in her marriage to Donovan, a marketing copywriter who has lied to

Plot cont'd

her about being laid off from his job. (For months, he kept pretending to go to work.) And she is increasingly stressed by her family's mounting debts, though she does not wish to be bailed out by her in-laws, as has happened before.

After passing out while meeting with Meredith, the owner of a yoga studio who wants to revamp her web site, Cat finally tests herself and discovers she is pregnant. (She's not happy about this news.) She goes to see her doctor to get the results of some further testing. The doctor tells her she has breast cancer. After being left alone in the examination room, she reacts by trashing the office.

Later that same day, she is confronted by Lena, her former house cleaner, who tells her that Donovan demanded he watch her masturbate, leading to her quitting her job cleaning houses altogether.

Now at the point of total breakdown, Cat gets intensely drunk and flees to the home of Meredith, who seems like the only person who might be able to get control of her life. Meredith takes her in, and slowly leads her





Plot cont'd

to believe that the best treatment for her cancer is meditation and a series of new-age rituals.

Meanwhile, Donovan is left to parent the two young kids, with some help from Cat's sister, Claudia. He decides to sue his former employers for wrongful dismissal, and we discover that the reason he was fired was because he sexually harassed Bianca, a younger female employee with whom he'd been flirting for a while.

Bianca, finding out about Donovan's lawsuit (in which she is named), asks her ex-boyfriend Ravi, a very junior legal assistant, to do something about it. She also reveals that she is pregnant, and that child is likely his.

Ravi decides to simply show up at Donovan's house and warn him off the lawsuit. The encounter goes badly, and he ends up nearly running over Silas with his car, giving the boy a broken arm and some serious scrapes and bruises.

Through Claudia, Isabella and Silas meet secretly with Cat, in encounters that are strictly controlled by Meredith. Donovan discovers where Cat is staying, and goes with Cat's father to confront Meredith, but chickens out at the last

Plot cont'd

moment and refuses to get out of the car. Meredith simply sends Cat's father away.

Cat grows increasingly sick while in Meredith's care, and eventually returns to her own house, though it is too late for treatment, and she dies.

Not long after Cat's death, Claudia agrees to help sell the family house (the kids move in with Cat's parents). She calls Lena to come clean the house in preparation for showing it to potential buyers.

Lena, though reluctant, changes her mind when she hears that Cat has died. Her guilt about having told Cat what Donovan did makes her feel somewhat responsible, and so she arrives to clean the empty house. Though she is upset at the state of the house and about her role in the whole situation, Lena feels at ease for the first time in months, feeling as though she is doing something meaningful, a kind of penance. In a sense, too, she feels like cleaning Cat's house is a way of purging this family – and all the other people who have belittled her – from her life. Lena sacrifices her own dignity in order to repair some of the damage done by the choices made by Cat and Donovan.



CHARACTERS



Rachel McAdams



Maggie Gyllenhaal

Cat:

White, early 40s, short "mom" haircut (ie, one that requires little upkeep), slightly dowdy clothes, often with a food stain somewhere from feeding little kids and preparing school lunches. The oldest sister of two from a lower-middle-class/working class family from a smallish city. Somewhat anxious about having married into wealth.



Chris Pine



Sebastian Stan

Donovan:

White, handsome, early 40s, attractive – not as much as he was in his 20s and 30s, but still over-confident in his looks. Very smiley and charming, at least on a superficial level. A 'how's it going?' guy. The only child of wealthy parents. Grew up in one of Toronto's wealthy neighbourhoods. The very picture of white male entitlement, though he considers himself progressive and enlightened.



Charlize Theron



Reese Witherspoon

Claudia:

White, late 30s. Attractive, and very conscious of being so. Like Cat, she is married to a wealthy husband, but unlike Cat, it doesn't make her anxious AT ALL. She dresses very fashionably and gets a weekly blowout/mani/pedi at an upscale salon.



Gabrielle Jacinto



Peyton Elizabeth Lee

Lena:

Filipino, 20s. Shortish hair, which she cuts herself. Slim, and tends to wear bland clothes that hide her figure and that are also useful in cleaning houses. Lives alone in an apartment building in an inner suburb of Toronto. (eg, Don Mills)



Allison Janney



Francis McDormand

Meredith:

White, 60s or 70s. Thin, with brightly coloured hair. Very fit and muscular. Born to working class parents with Marxist leanings, but married an extremely wealthy man. A widow. Very no-nonsense, with powerful charisma.



Himesh Patel



Vinny Chhibber

Ravi:

South Asian, 20s/early 30s. Legal assistant. A bit of a bro, though not obnoxious about it. Stylishly dressed. Great hair. Tries to project confidence, but usually fails. Lives in a hip condo building in downtown Toronto.



Sarah Jeffery



Simone Ashley

Bianca:

Mixed race (Black and white), late 20s. Very attractive, and knows it. Instagram account full of selfies. Very stylishly dressed. Also lives in a hip condo building in downtown Toronto.



STONE/GENRE/STYLE

A dramedy. The dramatic elements (such as Cat's illness and the various misdeeds by Donovan) would be balanced with lighter or sillier elements and moments of cringe-comedy, such as Donovan's attempts to be single-dad or Meredith's new-age "cures."

SIMILAR TONE/ GENRE

[All of these share *Lump*'s theme of a 'perfect' life being revealed as deeply flawed when it falls apart under extreme stress. They also mix drama with dark, often absurdist humour.]

FILMS:

The Squid and the Whale (Noah Baumbach)

Toni Erdmann (Maren Ade)

Beginners (Mike Mills)

A Serious Man (Coen Brothers)

Secrets & Lies (Mike Leigh)

TV:

Wanderlust (Netflix)

Beef (Netflix)



The Squid and the Whale



A Serious Man



Wanderlust

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Nathan Whitlock is the author of the novels *A Week of This*, *Congratulations On Everything*, and *Lump*. Nathan's writing has appeared in the *New York Review of Books*, the *Walrus*, *Chatelaine*, *Today's Parent*, the *Globe and Mail*, *Best Canadian Essays*, and elsewhere. He is the coordinator for Humber College's Creative Book Publishing program, which he also teaches in, and makes the weekly author-interview

podcast *What Happened Next*. He lives with his wife, award-winning author Meaghan Strimas, and their family in Hamilton, Ontario.





ABOUT DUNDURN

With over 2,300 books in print, **Dundurn Press** is a Canadian publisher known for delivering high-quality, award-winning literature across diverse genres. Our mission is to produce captivating books that capture the essence of the world, providing both enlightenment and entertainment. We amplify exceptional Canadian voices, particularly those that have been underrepresented, showcasing the rich cultural diversity and untold stories that make Canada vibrant.

We have titles in a wide range of genres designed to cater to varied reading preferences. This includes award-winning literary and genre fiction, lifestyle, memoirs, biographies, history, and business, as well as middle-grade and teen fiction.

Our dedication to excellence has garnered prestigious awards and nominations, including the Amazon First Novel Award, Scotiabank Giller Prize, Donner Prize, LAMBDA Literary Awards, Crime Writers of Canada Awards, Heritage Toronto Award, Toronto Book Award, Hamilton Literary Award, and Forest of Reading Awards.

For more information please reach out to

Eva Svec, Rights and Permissions

esvec@dundurn.com