



The Facts of Life (Graphic Medicine)

Paula Knight

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In the 1970s, best friends Polly and April collect hazy knowledge about the “facts of life”—sex, reproduction, and gender norms—through the gossip of older girls, magazines and books, and the everyday behavior of their families and teachers. What they learn reinforces their assumption that they will grow up to become mothers. As the years pass, they each choose paths that they believe will enable them to “have it all.”

April’s dreams of motherhood come true before too long, but as Polly enthusiastically builds a career, her desire and hope to start a family become less firmly ingrained. Her struggles with chronic illness also have an effect on her choices and relationships, and she wonders whether motherhood will be in the cards for her at all. Soon she meets Jack, and together they start a fraught journey, first debating whether parenthood is right for them and then facing the heartbreak of repeated miscarriages and the effects of illness on their ability to have a child. Through it all, Polly is forced to reexamine what family can mean in a society that so often associates family—and womanhood—with children.

Beautifully drawn and poignantly honest, *The Facts of Life* is a funny, sometimes painful graphic memoir that explores what it takes to be a woman, a partner, and a mother . . . or not.



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