

READ BETWEEN THE LINES

A NOTE BY AUTHOR JO KNOWLES



Eleven years ago, I was driving in the car with my husband and son, who was four at the time. We were in Hanover, New Hampshire, where my husband had just accepted a job, and we were checking out the area. Coming down

Main Street, a man in a Volvo station wagon was about to run into us because he hadn't been paying attention at the light. My husband quickly honked the horn to warn him. Instead of being grateful, the man gave us the finger! Not only that, he also had two little kids in his car. I admit, I haven't been given the finger too many times in my life, and I might have overreacted. I kept saying to my husband, "Can you believe that guy? Can you believe it?" And my husband was like, "Calm down, it's just the finger." But it grated on my nerves, and I kept bringing it up, driving my husband nuts.

Eventually, we started talking about why people give the finger. And why people, like me, get so offended by it. Pretty soon I was thinking of all these different daily scenarios in which people give and get the finger. And then I thought, wouldn't it be interesting to explore this in a book? For years, I jotted down story ideas and chapter titles. Then I started to write the stories. I wrote this book because I've always been fascinated by how we can experience the same events in vastly different ways, and how just one small word (or gesture, in this case) can change the course of the day. Even more than that, I wanted to explore the ways in which how we treat one another, even in subtle ways, can change not only a person's day, but a person's life.

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