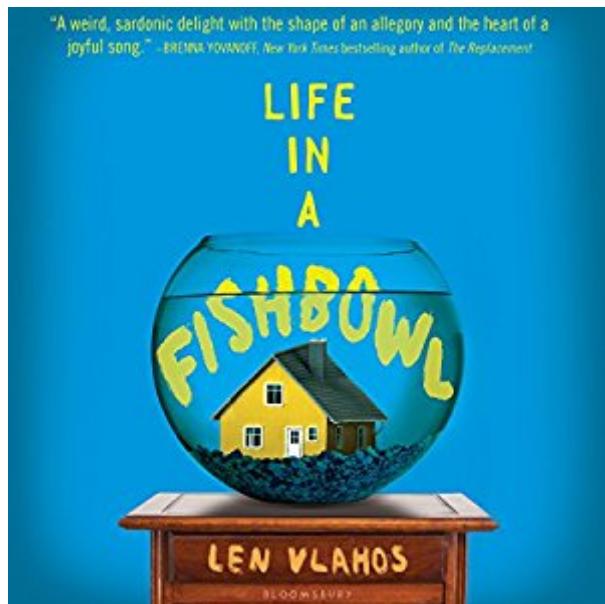


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# Life In A Fishbowl



## **Synopsis**

Fifteen-year-old Jackie Stone's father is dying. When Jackie discovers that her father has been diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor, her whole world starts to crumble. She can't imagine how she'll live without him. Then, in a desperate act to secure his family's future, Jackie's father does the unthinkable - he puts his life up for auction on eBay. Jackie can do nothing but watch and wait as an odd assortment of bidders, some with nefarious intentions, drive the price up higher. The fate of her entire family hangs in the balance. But no one can predict how the auction will finally end or any of the very public fallout that ensues. Life as Jackie knows it is about to change forever.... In this brilliantly written tragicomedy told through multiple points of view - including Jackie's dad's tumor - acclaimed author Len Vlahos deftly explores what it really means to live.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Great book. So much going on in within its pages. Well written and extremely creative. I loved it and look forward to more by this author.

YA is a genre that has largely passed me by but I liked the premise of Life in a Fishbowl and thought I'd take a look. I'm glad I did. Jared Stone, an Oregon state senator, is working on an assisted dying bill when he discovers he has a terminal brain tumour (glioblastoma multiforme). He doesn't immediately tell his family, but he considers the financial implications of his death and decides, for their sake, to auction what remains of his life

on eBay. The novel follows the impact of events on his family — in particular his sensitive, lonely fifteen-year-old daughter Jackie (whose response contrasts with her pretty, popular younger sister Megan) and four people who make a bid for Jared's life, for very different reasons. Life in a Fishbowl succeeds in treading a very difficult line — it is full of absurdist humour but it also has compassion and doesn't shrink from difficult issues such as bereavement and assisted dying. It takes in a lot of zeitgeisty themes — reality TV, computer games, PR, as well as perennial topics such as the torment of not being popular at school. As you'd expect, Jackie is the focus of the novel (presumably because sensitive, lonely girls read more books than pretty, popular ones) but we get the perspectives of all the family. Even the tumour, Glio, is anthropomorphised. I thought at first this might be too cute, but it means the author can show Jared's memories as Glio devours them, and gives us Jared's thoughts at a time when he cannot articulate them. Life in a Fishbowl shines a satirical light on contemporary culture but also has great warmth. It is funny, engaging and full of life. \*I received a copy of Life in a Fishbowl from the publisher via Netgalley.

I received a free copy from the publisher through the Children's and Young Adult Book Review Board of Missouri in exchange for an honest review. An inoperable glioblastoma multiforme brain tumor is feasting on Jared Stone's brain. This explains his bouts of confusion and forgetfulness that have lately plagued Jared's daily life. The doctors give Jared less than a year to live, but his life will never be the same. His mental capacity will deteriorate with each passing day. Jerod tries to figure out how his family will financially survive without him. He comes up with a spur of the moment idea: selling himself on eBay with a reserve of one million dollars. This creates an overwhelming outpouring of emotions ranging from outrage to sympathy. It also causes several individuals to bid on Jared's life: a catholic nun; a spoiled, rich billionaire; a heartless all-business television executive, and a hardcore virtual reality gamer. Each has a reason for wanting to help Jared and his family; Deidre, his wife; and Jackie and Megan, his daughters. The final solution gives the Stones a new normal. "This was a twenty-four-seven spotlight on the end of their father's life and husband's life with all the world watching. Their house was being transformed into a cruel kind of fishbowl, and all they could do was pucker and swim." This book is packed with raw emotions. The reader's emotions will take a rollercoaster ride throughout the book. This is one of my favorite things about this book. My heart experienced every

emotion possible: joy, compassion, empathy, loathing, hatred, disbelief, and a score of others. The loathing emotion was probably the one that resonated the most. In the story, Jared's tumor, Glio, is a main character. As Glio eats Jared's memories, he actually lives them. He experiences the smells, sights, touches, emotions, and sounds Jared experienced when he lived the memories. From the very first time the tumor is introduced, I loathed him. He was so selfish and self-centered. As he eats the memories, they are erased from Jared's mind. "With each bite Glio took of this previously inaccessible corner of the brain. Jared's eyes lost an iota of sparkle. It was as if he were the personification of the story where someone was removing all the adjectives, conjunctions, and adverbs, so the only things left were noun and verbs." The way Valhos gives Glio the personality and the driving force to devour all of Jared's mind made Glio ultimate villains. Several of the eBay bidders have some very SICK reasons to purchase Jared. These characters also play with your negative emotions. There are a lot of people to despise in this story: Sister Benedict, Ethan Overbee, and Sherman Kingsborough to just name a few. This book also renews your faith in humankind. The acts of kindness Jackie, Deirdre, Max, and Hazel perform will make your heart feel happy again. I loved how Valhos allows the reader inside the minds of the characters so each action is fully understood. The rollercoaster ride of emotions is justified at the end of the book. It is a happy-sad ending. Of course, Jared dies, but if he didn't, the book would be ruined. Justice is served and all the reader's questions are answered. Living in a Fishbowl also address some very deep issues. Prolonged life, assisted suicide, quality of life, and patient rights are just a few. Each issue is handled in a way that allows the reader to step back and think about both sides. It presents these issues in a personal way. I highly recommend this book for upper middle schoolers and high schoolers. It is not for everyone, but those that like it will list it as a new favorite. It would make the perfect book club book because it offers several topics for deep discussions.

If you found out you were going to die, what would you do? Life in a Fishbowl follows a father faced with just that decision and the fallout from his choices. Life in a Fishbowl is told in third person from varying points of view • Jackie, her father, various bidders and the tumor that upended everything to begin with. This gives Life in a Fishbowl an almost documentary feel that works well with the subject. I admit this style took some getting used to initially, but the story is so compelling, I found it easy to adjust. From the TV producer who will do anything for ratings to the father who just wants to provide for his family, Life in a Fishbowl is an excellent look at life and how

it is valued or not as the case may be. Author Len Vlahos strips away the smoke and mirrors that often misguide us, and instead gives us a raw look at terminal illness and how being true to yourself can set you free.

I found this book very disappointing. While the premise was intriguing enough to keep me reading, it was not enough to overcome all the book's other issues. I found the book terribly insensitive and somewhat offensive. It takes very serious topics and uses them for cheap laughs. Also, the book is told in six changes with up to, I would guess, twelve characters switching back and forth in third person personal. This was less confusing and more annoying to read. It also bars the reader from making connections with the characters.

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