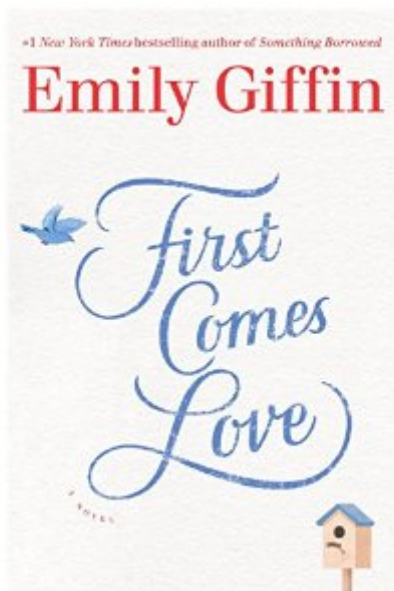


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First Comes Love: A Novel



Synopsis

In a dazzling, delightful new novel that's quintessential Emily Giffin, the number one New York Times best-selling author of *Something Borrowed*, *Where We Belong*, and *The One & Only* introduces a pair of 30-something sisters who find themselves asking: If love, marriage, and children don't arrive in the usual order, which comes first?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I vacillated between 3 and 4 stars..... I so wanted to like this book. Let me start out by saying that Emily Giffin can write and she does it well. The book sucked me in from the very beginning. The opening chapter--the preview, really--was the best written part of this book. Once I started reading, I devoured the book in a day. It kept me interested and engaged all day yesterday--but the conclusion infuriated me enough that I am up this morning writing this review. Giffin is the rare author that can make poignant emotional observations and not weigh them down under too flowery prose. She writes simply but allows the reader to experience emotional highs/low. She successfully allows you to get into the rich inner lives of other people. She knows how to hold up a mirror to our latest societal obsessions--facebook, etc. She understands the language of women and is an expert at crafting female relationships that resonated. She also NAILS Buckhead/Atlanta, and having lived there (in her neighborhood, no less) years ago, I recognized the world she drew and enjoyed revisiting. All that was great.....and yet.....These are not very likable characters. At first, I overlooked their flaws thinking that part of a well-written narrative involves making the reader feel slightly

superior to the characters, who after all, are there to grow, right? Flawed characters are interesting. Initially, I appreciated how, for example, she illustrated that Meredith was a negative control freak and Josie was a self-involved drama queen. It reminded me a bit of Jennifer Weiner's "In Her Shoes" and I was excited to bite off a juicy read. I wanted to see Giffin's take on two clearly spoiled children and was excited to see their arc.

Emily Giffin probably holds the title as the American queen of women's fiction. I enjoyed most of her books, however, absolutely loved *Something Borrowed* and *The Heart of the Matter*. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown", as it is probably next to impossible to crank out consistently well written books one after another. Unfortunately, her last two books began to show some wear and tear and were less than stellar. I am happy to report *First Comes Love*, is ever so much better, although, not quite as perfect as my two favorites. *First Comes Love* is a quick read, with solid writing and characters that hook you in a way that can't let you go. Survivors guilt, love and forgiveness are the themes most prevalent in this one. Closing in on the big 40, Sisters Josie and Meredith Garland always had a prickly relationship and were never close. Their parents marriage may have been tenuous, their father had a drinking problem, however, their brother Daniel, who was extraordinary in every way, was the glue that held the family together. His tragic death in a car accident alters not only his life but the lives of those around him. Fast forward fifteen years later as each sister comes to terms with each other and their lives in ways they never expected. Always a perfectionist with OCD characteristics, lately Meredith has become ever more daunting to be around. Meredith would seem to have it all. A loving husband and daughter, she is a high billing attorney in Atlanta. Unbeknownst to those around her, Meredith is questioning if the decisions she made in both love and career were what she wanted or done to please others. Meredith would be difficult a character to care about, if she wasn't seen to struggle so hard with the events and defenses that led her to becoming that person.

I have had mixed feelings about Emily Giffin's writing - some books have been outstanding and others seem characterized by weak female protagonists that seem to play the victim role and are unable to stand up for themselves. That said, I found "First Comes Love" in the middle of the pack. I enjoyed it as an entertaining and quick read while noting that Josie and Meredith, the two main characters, possessed a bit of the afore-mentioned weaknesses. The book begins with a prologue that describes the tragic loss of the sisters' brother, Daniel, a brilliant and well-loved medical student. As the storyline unfolds fifteen years later, the impact of this loss is still reverberating through the

family as unresolved grief taints their relationships. The parents are divorced, in part due to the father's alcoholism, and the sisters have a connection marred by passive-aggressive behavior and not-so-latent hostility. Josie is characterized as a free spirit whose impulsive nature is viewed as selfish and irresponsible by her sibling. This is despite the fact that she is a well-respected first grade teacher. Meredith, on the other hand, is an uptight, overachieving lawyer with an adoring husband and an adorable four year old daughter. It struck me that part of the tension between the sisters relates to their birth order. Daniel was the first born and is remembered as "perfect" in everyone's eyes. Josie, as the middle child, seems to be a bit lost in finding herself and her rightful place in the family and so she does her own thing. Being the youngest, Meredith seem to have taken up the mantle of pleasing the family in Daniel's absence. The family dynamics reach a critical point as the fifteenth anniversary of Daniel's death approaches.

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