



Love and Happiness

Galt Niederhoffer

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The author of *The Romantics* and *A Taxonomy of Barnacles* tackles the ultimate romantic minefield—marriage—in **LOVE AND HAPPINESS**.

Galt Niederhoffer's previous novels have been layered stories of connections, both made and missed, and explorations of the spark that leads to enduring love. **LOVE AND HAPPINESS** is a mature and involving novel with a love quadrangle at its core and a winning heroine, Jean Banks, at the center. Jean's job producing independent movies is a soul-deadening slog, and she doesn't like what she sees in the mirror either. Her children are a constant joy, but also a constant drag, certainly on the image she and her husband, Sam, had of themselves as fun-loving, free-spirited non-conforming artists. Now they just live in Brooklyn. Jean's nightly release is a series of long, longing emails to a former flame—emails that, nightly, go unsent. Until one night, she presses that button.

Niederhoffer's plot—putting Jean's fate into her relative attraction to her husband, her former lover, and a somewhat questionable but extremely appealing man she meets on a business trip—is complex and compelling. But what will make readers recommend it to friends is Niederhoffer's assured, smart, sexy rendering of the subtleties of human behavior. Both of Niederhoffer's previous books have had something of an autobiographical element, and this one, with its sharp and funny secondary world of the "business" of independent film—what Galt does in her day job as one of the principals of Park Pictures, perennial Sundance entrants—gives the book extra sparkle.

Love and Happiness Details

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From Reader Review Love and Happiness for online ebook

Becky Sandham Mathwin says

I didn't like this book but it was compelling enough that I finished it so I'm putting it in the "okay" category (I don't finish books that I really don't like). I didn't find the characters or the plot particularly interesting and the novel just didn't gel for me. The characters were underdeveloped and the chapters didn't flow well. However, I was curious enough to finish it so I guess that's something.

Karstee says

I don't know if I've ever hated a main character more.

Ann says

I received this book from GoodReads First Reads

After years of marriage and two kids, Jean feels disconnected from the life she has built. Her relationship with her husband, Sam, is an empty shell; she goes through the motions of every day life yearning for something more. During a business trip she meets Ben, an attractive and mysterious man whose mere existence consumes her thoughts.

Though *Love and Happiness* is described as a novel with a "love quadrangle" it's more of a triangle. Doug, Jean's former boyfriend, isn't so much of a player in this game. Niederhoffer's depiction of marriage was utterly depressing. Snippets of happier times between Jean and Sam held so much promise for a fulfilling future, but this was not the case, as with many relationships. People change. They drift apart.

Likes

1. The interactions Jean and Sam had. Though there were few, they were charged with emotions. Feelings of detachment, vulnerability, helplessness, rage, and despondence.

(view spoiler)

Dislikes

1. Jean's obsession with Ben. The lengths she went through to find out more information about him were ridiculous.

(view spoiler)

Joy says

This novel is like a finely painted miniature -- Niederhoffer holds a magnifying glass over the question "what is intimacy?" and then paints it in all its nuances. The main character, Jean, is having a typical mid-life crisis, and there is nothing surprising about the plot. But Jean's work as a film producer leads her to examine and

question how bonds form between people -- as when a group of strangers comes together on a film set and has to learn to rely utterly upon one another, only to disband again a few months later. Does intimacy just "happen" when all the conditions are right and fade when conditions change? And if it does, then how are we to direct our own quests for love and happiness?

Kate says

I don't like to can books without giving reasons why. So, in regards to *Love and Happiness* by Galt Niederhoffer:

01. Dialogue: terrible, stilted, awkward – kind of surprising because my understanding was that Niederhoffer has written screen plays, so I assumed that she would be across the dialogue thing.

"You're so sexy," said Sam. "Out there, fighting for us. You sexy independent woman."

"Sam," said Jean. "I've been up all night. I'm going to sleep for an hour."

"Come on. Before the kids wake up." He lunged from the bed and kissed her neck, his version of romantic. Jean returned the kiss with a polite version.

"Honey, we're really doing it," said Sam, ignoring Jean's signal.

"Doing what?" said Jean.

"Teaming up."

"Against?"

"You know...the People Who Said It Couldn't Be Done. The Disbelievers. The Masses."

"Honey, there's no one opposing force. It's just us and our goals, our compulsions."

"Jeannie, come on. This is the dream. Both of us on the same side, fighting for our salvation."

02. Characters: characters are introduced with great fanfare and then simply disappear – what happened to the investor guy with the private jet? What about the actor? And then there's the remarkable lack of consistency with character traits – Jean is apparently 'shy' but also chats up men at the drop of a hat and is a pushy indie-movie producer...

03. Plot: ludicrous. On so many levels. Jean is idiotic to the power of one hundred – she meets some random guy in a bar; starts texting him; thinks he might be a con-man; stays up all night spending money on online data services trying to discover if he is con man; hires a private investigator; meets up with con man suspect anyway; convinced she is in love after first date: starts an affair with him. Meanwhile, f*ck-all mention of her husband, kids, job... the whole thing was so unconvincing. I couldn't imagine a single bit of it actually happening.

Within minutes, Ben had secured his spot as Jean's new favorite person, starred in a handful of leading roles in high-concept daydreams. Jean was halfway through a romp in which they escaped to a deserted island. But before she could crest the arc of act one, he was ripping the bar check in half, scrawling something on the back, and handing it to Jean like a secret agent.

and then –

I ended the night pretty assured I had met my soulmate.

04. Relevance (or rather, irrelevance): large chunks of text about movie investors and the specifics of crew

roles on a movie set? Whatever.

05. Repetitive: clearly Niederhoffer has written about the same thing many ways and instead of editing, she decided to use #ALLTHESENTENCES.

Just like this, Jean settled into her nightly ritual, an elaborate process whereby she pretended to work but, in fact, distracted herself from her desired concentrations. A master of multitasking, she achieved impressive feats of procrastination, creating ever more byzantine methods to distance herself from the one thing she actually wanted. Jean was an optical illusion, an impossible math problem, a human treadmill; with every step she took closer to her goals, she pushed herself further from them.

What?

06. Bizarre analogies: just urgh –

Listening to his snapshotted stories, each one preserved by its simple frame, Jean felt an all-consuming rush that was much like being pulled by a tide. It was both an exhilarating honor to be privileged with the contents of another person's heart, and a terrifying and fearsome pull to be carried by its current.

1/5 Dire.

I received my copy of Love and Happiness from the publisher, St Martin's Press, via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review.

Kate says

Do you enjoy fiction? Don't worry, this novel can change that.

It's my own fault, really. I got to this bit on page 12...

"Wow," he said. It was the first time Jean had heard the word uttered in earnest.

...and I kept reading. I got what I deserved.

Emma says

This book really stuck with me. The writing is funny and verbose. Jean is a complex, thoroughly modern heroine for our times. The literary equivalent of Liz Lemon. At times the choices Jean makes are ridiculous but the writer has such a deep understanding for her and the men, women and children in her orbit that you totally believe every bit of it. This book moves briskly from chapter to chapter and is very entertaining but has a surprising emotional depth to it. I was shocked by how moved I was by the end. This is great writing.

Rhonda says

Let me start by saying that I enjoy light romances where I can escape the real world for a while. Due to my desire to escape and enjoy light and happy stories, this was a difficult read for me. The story never really grabbed me and I did not connect with the main character, Jean, at all. Although, I understood that she was confused and dissatisfied with her life, I did not like to reading about her dating another man and drafting emails to an exboyfriend. A side from the infidelity and betrayal, I did like the way the book was written. There were witty remarks and great metaphors. It also provoked some deep thoughts about relationships and marriage. I thought the book was realistic and I could see someone actually behaving like Jean. The lengths she went through to find out Benjamin Kraft's past were like that of a stalker and again, realistic. There were a lot of descriptions about the making of an independent film that didn't particularly interest me. Overall, Love and Happiness touched on many questions, decisions, and consequences that people face in life and was full of drama.

I'd recommend this book to the people that want to read gritty, realistic dramas.

Mary Cooper says

Mundane. Uninspired. Could not finish despite several efforts.

Kelly says

I typically like to feel some connection to a main character in a novel and I could not with Jean. Perhaps this need is a personal limitation in my reading, but I found her to be unlikable, weak and frankly, confusing. Her first date with Ben made no sense to me whatsoever. She interrogated him about a climbing trip in the manner of someone who JUST CAN'T BELIEVE the man climbed a mountain with a college buddy. Why?! I understand their first meeting was a bit odd with him "forgetting" to pay the bill, but her level of doubt and obsession struck me as totally unbelievable unless this woman is straight up crazy. She must be extremely bored to hire a private investigator to learn more about a man with whom she had one fun, flirtatious conversation in a hotel bar. I guess that was kind of the point.

I was also bothered by the games she played in the relationship. On the one hand, she wanted to be direct and text him, despite her friend's urging that she wait for him to contact her, lest she look desperate. But then she told him she just wanted to be friends, when she clearly wanted more than that? Huh? Is this woman an adult, or a high school kid?

The most enjoyable part of the novel for me was when her husband, Sam, created a fake identity to try to trap Doug, the ex-boyfriend. Although his behavior was questionable, it was the first and only part of the story where Sam had any balls. I was rooting for him.

Women like Jean will never be satisfied. It's only a matter of time until she tires of Ben. I guess that's Niederhoffer's point - love and happiness are fleeting. I think that message can be (and has been) delivered much better.

Paula says

I received this book through the Goodreads Firstreads giveaway program. Thanks for the opportunity to read and review this book.

Of course I was drawn to the title of the book I enjoy reading love stories. This book is about a married couple Jean and Sam who produce and direct independent movies. There is some technical descriptions about the making of movies. The couple has two children and they live in Brooklyn.

Jean is no longer physically or emotionally happy in her marriage. The book is described as a quadrangle but as another reviewer mentioned it really is a love triangle. She goes on to explore finding "love and happiness" with another man she meets on a business trip.

Alexandra says

Galt Niederhoffer is no doubt a good writer. Prose is nice, sentences string together fluidly into interesting paragraphs. But when you put all of the paragraphs together into the overall story, it just doesn't seem to make much sense. Or when you think it does, it doesn't last for long and you end up super confused.

The main character Jean really annoyed me. She was so unsure of literally everything. Herself, the world and people around her. She questioned EVERY LITTLE THING and not in a curious, intelligent way but a very annoying one. Here is a little snippet of ~~interrogation~~ conversation between Jean and Benjamin (a man she met at a bar in California while on business): "*Sounds exciting.*"

"Yes, it was."

"Did you use a compass?"

"GPS- and guide. But we still almost got lost."

"How did you find your way back?" Jean asked. She may as well have been asking herself. Everything he said now tripped an alarm, causing her either to doubt Benjamin or to doubt herself.

"We almost didn't," he explained. "But the guide saw us on the trail."

"How did he see you?"

"I don't know. I didn't ask. I'm not a geologist."

"You're a climber."

"I was. That day."

"You just went there? For vacation?"

And well, you get the point. Incessant questions are incessant.

Jean is annoying, an interrogator and quite frankly fucked up her marriage for no good reason that I could see with a man that had absolutely no appeal at all, sexual or otherwise. To give you an idea of how crazy she was, here is a brief glimpse into her emotional state when she hadn't heard from Ben: *The only thing worse than losing an organ, than mutilation, swift and violent, was the possibility that Benjamin would not write back, at which point the bizarre and invigorating adventure would finally and officially be over.* yeah. Apparently she thought that losing a lung would be better than not hearing from a random guy she met at a hotel bar. So, enough said. This book made me feel crazy.

Dayva says

Try as I might, I could not finish this book. When I read reviews, before starting, it looked like no one liked it. I was determined to find some value in it. I found myself skipping words, then sentences to try to just get through it. It's painfully awful! So, even though I could not waste perfectly good time to finish reading it, I am, irrevocably finished with this book.

Lyle Appleyard says

I received an advanced reading copy of this novel from the Goodreads Giveaway.

A woman is in a marriage that she does feel part of anymore. She meets a man that intrigues her. She tracks him down. They start what seems a harmless friendship. The well laid plans of mice and men.

This is not the first book that has the main character of a woman have an affair outside of the marriage. So what could the author do differently? The twist is that the man has a girlfriend already and only wants to be friends. An illicit friendship? This does make for an interesting storyline. The main character continues to be confused about what she wants and what to do.

This book tries to be a character driven story. The story centres mainly on the female character. The other male characters are not as developed as hers is. Although her character is the central focus of the story, I felt no empathy for her circumstances. The author tries to demonstrate that the excitement is gone from the marriage.

There were a few grammatical errors that I hope are caught before the book goes to market.

It was not a hard book to read. I read it quickly. It was an enjoyable little read.

Beth says

This is what I get for only reading the first sentence (and not the back cover) of a book when deciding whether or not I will read it. The first few chapters were hilarious but the story lost its momentum and had a main character that I just did not understand or care about. You have to make the reader care for the character.
