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The Hopefuls: A Novel



Synopsis

A brilliantly funny novel about ambition and marriage— from the best-selling author of *Girls in White Dresses*, *The Hopefuls* tells the story of a young wife who follows her husband and his political dreams to Washington, D.C., a city of idealism, gossip, and complicated friendships among the young aspiring elite. When Beth arrives in D.C., she hates everything about it: the confusing traffic circles, the ubiquitous Ann Taylor suits, the humidity that descends each summer. At dinner parties, guests compare their security clearance levels. They leave their BlackBerrys on the table. They speak in acronyms. And once they realize Beth doesn't work in politics, they smile blandly and turn away. Soon Beth and her husband, Matt, meet a charismatic White House staffer named Jimmy, and his wife, Ashleigh, and the four become inseparable, coordinating brunches, birthdays, and long weekends away. But as Jimmy's star rises higher and higher, the couple's friendship—and Beth's relationship with Matt—is threatened by jealousy, competition, and rumors. A glorious send-up of young D.C. and a blazingly honest portrait of a marriage, this is the finest work yet by one of our most beloved writers. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Like many, I bought this book after reading the feature in EW magazine. As a 37-year-old academic

professional the description sounded right up my alley. Here's the thing: I vacillated during the quick reading between whether I was going to give this 5, 4, 3, 2 or 1 stars. I can't remember a book evoking such a gambit of feelings in me before and that's why, ultimately, I had to choose 5 stars. I could not put this book down; I was hooked from the first page. That, for me, is sign number one of a great read. The second sign is if I have slightly bleary eyes on the last page; I did. During my reading I came to to read reviews in all five star categories, and found that I found things I agreed with at each gradient. Yeah, it's essentially true that this book has no real plot. Really, it doesn't. It's a slice of life novel about a few years in the lives of a few couples. At one point I asked myself, "Why am I reading this thing? It has no plot!" And yet I still could not put it down! And then it occurred to me: this is meta voyeurism of the first rate, and I love it! The author herself weaves a lot about reality TV and schlock celeb websites into the narrative and in the end, the reader really is gazing ravenously at the lives of the Dillons and the Kellys. Why I loved that so much, I can't exactly say. I loathe reality programming and I detest celeb gossip. But it's more than that: these people, with all their faults and neuroses, are average people. Maybe that's why I loved (and hated) them. As to Close's prose, it's top notch. She's just an excellent writer and her characterizations are mundane but realistic. Not every book can be about a Howard Roark or an Agatha Christie. Ayn Rand's Roark is a great character, but I don't identify with him. I don't see myself and my friends in him; I see them in the characters in this novel, for better or worse.

As an avid watcher of shows like West Wing and House of Cards, I was excited to read Jennifer Close's new novel, The Hopefuls. The novel centers around Beth and her husband Matt, who was an Obama campaign staffer. After he lands a job with the new administration, the couple leaves New York City for a new life in D.C. The novel chronicles the trials and tribulations associated with life in the D.C. bubble, politics, and the small worlds that often collide. Close writes from some personal experience, and Beth's observations and descriptions make that obvious. Beth and Matt become friends with another young couple, Jimmy and Ash. Jimmy is an ambitious Texan, and Matt soon becomes a part of his inner circle. Matt always seems to be in Jimmy's shadow, but his ambition keeps him going, and the passive Beth tags along. For most of the novel, there is a subtle conflict that builds, and this is what kept me reading late into the night. It's almost as though I expected some big, ugly mess to happen, but I'm not sure that the climax quite met my expectations. Other readers may have a different opinion. All in all, I enjoyed this book. I enjoyed the plot and enjoyed reading more about the inner workings of a life in politics. I expected a bit more from the ending, but this was an enjoyable read that I recommend to anyone looking for a fun,

summer book.

I am not sure why the description of this book calls it "brilliantly funny" because I found it to be neither. The main character is the wife of a White House staff member and I knew even before I checked that the author must have had a similar experience. Like many people in politics, she vastly overrates how interesting this life is to other people. There weren't really any exciting plot lines to compensate for the many small boring stories about a pretty mundane life that make up the bulk of this novel. I kept reading, expecting something interesting or exciting to happen, but I was disappointed.

The book initially caught my interest but now that I'm finished I wish I hadn't taken the time to read it. Nothing happens. Nothing. No interesting twist, nothing thought provoking. The characters were all unlikable - with Beth being the worst. You end up wanting to shake her for her lack of control over her own life. Get a backbone. If I'm going to spend the time reading a book I want to escape - this story isn't that - it was boring real life. I wouldn't even have lunch with Beth in real life.

In a time where so many books about women are straight-up thrillers, it's so refreshing to read a novel that keeps you wanting to turn the pages based purely on the high stakes of the characters' personal lives. Beth is such a funny, relatable narrator and seeing D.C. through her eyes is the ultimate election-year treat. But beyond the politics are great revelations about marriage and female friendship. I've never read a book with such an intimate look at two couples and how they interact, and that's what I'll remember *The Hopefuls* for most - the way Close drew this unique bond, and the way it gives rise to such riveting drama. *The Hopefuls* tapped into the same vein that made me love Curtis Sittenfeld's *American Wife* and, of course, Close's other books. Highly recommend.

I wanted to like this book, I really did. But it was painful to get through. The characters were so one-dimensional and the plot was trite and silly. It read to me like a short story that was turned into a novel, because as you read it, really so little happens, and the "climax" is so predictable and stupid as to not really even qualify as one. Really, so little happens in this book that you want to rush to the end just to finish!

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