



The Sad Truth About Happiness: A Novel

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A beautiful and affecting novel -- bittersweet and comic -- on the elusive nature of happiness

Maggie is in her early thirties, gainfully employed, between relationships, and ready for a change. But when she takes a quiz in a magazine that promises to predict the date of a person's death, she's shocked to learn she's going to die before her next birthday unless she can somehow discover contentment in life. What ensues is a quirky and satisfying journey in pursuit of true happiness, a quest that leads to unexpected joys and perceptions.

The Sad Truth About Happiness: A Novel Details

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Author : Anne Giardini

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From Reader Review The Sad Truth About Happiness: A Novel for online ebook

Miki Jacobs says

I was lent this by a friend as she had enjoyed it. It was one of those books I think you would either love or hate. Thankfully I loved it. The only downside was near to the end where you have to jump to your own conclusions about certain aspects of the story. Other than that a lovely book.

CATHERINE says

This started off well and I liked the writing style. The premise seemed intriguing, a woman takes a quiz and it seems that she will die in a year and the reason seems to be a lack of happiness in her life. She starts to make some minor changes to see if she can change the result.

So the positives were that her happiness wasn't determined by a man or lack of one in her life and as I am lucky enough to live in Vancouver the description of the city was like hearing about an old friend.

Sadly the negatives were many. There was a truly dreadful plot twist in the middle, it was unforgiveable, dangerous and incredibly stupid. As a parent if someone did that to me I would never forgive them, yet it is glossed over. Then Maggie ends up in a large house in Vancouver, this book was published in 2006, there is absolutely no way unless she was privately wealthy she could have afforded to live there, a practical point but still! The selfish choices she makes essentially save her life. Instead of a story about someone's empowerment to own their own happiness and to make decisions to improve it rather than drifting through life, she is rewarded for nearly destroying someone else's.

Nina says

The book started out really good, then it took a twist and just became bizzare, so I don't really recommend it.

Estela Anders says

Maggie is not happy, although she is not unhappy either. When a quiz reveals that her mood will kill her soon she starts looking into how to change it. Except she seems to forget all about that and keeps going on with her life until she starts making insanely bad decisions on behalf of her sister (who is unaware of Maggie's noble, if misguided, good intentions).

Despite some crazy moments, there is some brilliant writing and wonderful insights in this book, like the paragraph where Maggie describes her grief after losing her best friend.

Karen says

I really enjoyed this book in the beginning and loved it when the story took an unexpected turn. At that point

I would have given it a 4. By the end I was left scratching my head unfortunately. Anne has extremely strong writing skills, and I'd love to read something else by her that a) has a title that makes more sense, b) is not quite so descriptive c) has a better plot/ story line and ending. I mean Christmas Eve and Day was not typical at all - I found I had to go back and reread to make sure I had the right date.

Does anyone know of anything else she's written? Loved that the story was set in Canada.

Mary says

The best thing about this book is the cover. The endless pontificating and introspection make it a tedious read at best and get in the way of a pretty thin plot line.

Tivo says

The author makes some interesting insights, and I enjoyed the fact that the book takes place in Vancouver, but otherwise, I found the story to be meandering and a bit pointless. I also found Maggie's character frustrating.

Ilse Snell says

The more I think about the errors in the book, the more I just want to slap Anne Giardini for subjecting people to her writing at all.

Alas, I was in a forgiving mood at the time when I started reading it and could be lenient to common first time author mistakes.

But then it started escalating, and snow balling into a disaster waiting to happen.

Maggie's character flaws (and by character flaws, I don't mean a character which I merely don't like, I mean a character which has been created with a full description of how and what she is, and yet, the actions doesn't fit the personality profile) and plot holes became just unbearable.

Along side this; it was as if Giardini lost interest during the second half of writing the book.

Maggie's gets a sudden wake up call when her friend Rebecca does a little magazine questionnaire with her to determine her exact time of death. The test shows Maggie is to die with in the year due to her apparent unhappiness. Maggie realises she might be giving the test more credit than it deserved...but also realises something is missing from her life.

And that's when Giardini lost the plot.

The overly descriptiveness of the author had my eye twitching a bit, but I was like "hey, new author, don't be harsh..... She needs to get it out of her system. So I continued with it. Then in some cases she would get so distracted with her discussion of a certain topic that she would completely loose sight of what the role of the character with regards to that discussion is. But that was also understandable, some how, I was like "meh, happens to the best of them".

Where the author struck a complete "I can kill you nerve" was when she twice in answer to being commented on being spiritual, said, "I'm not religious at all". What?! That's like someone asking you "would you like an apple? And you saying" no thanks, I don't eat pears" I could feel the blood starting to boil in my veins. .

When she kidnapped of her nephew from of the hospital; the kid was a few days old, recovering from jaundice for Christ sake! Taking him out in the icy Canadian weather, handing him over to a homeless girl in

the hopes of "saving him" from a custody battle between the parents.... telling the girl to meet her in the church, down the road, giving her money to buy shit, and returns to the hospital to replace the coat she "borrowed" from the nearby chair and to present another kid, who she wheeled out of the room, to the dad. All a while the author wants us to believe that this was a spur of the moment decision on Maggie's behalf? That is utter bull Giardini'. That was no lapse in concentration. Stop trying to mask your character's plain ignorance and trying to pass her off as some one with good intentions.

I wont even mention the excessive roll of my eyes as Maggie came to her pea-brain senses and thought "Oh no, what did I do?!?! I gave my few days old sick nephew to a homeless girl, with money to meet me in a church!"

Then having to read Giardini's over share in what she knows about kid trafficking and the horrors that occur there. Excuse me, but your character created the scenario! It was painfully stupid, but it was created, I won't be feeling any sympathy towards her constant state of idiocies.

It doesn't stop there, she takes the kid to Montreal, gets another woman to breast feed him, a stranger. All along wondering what kind of world she lives in where a missing baby from a hospital doesn't make headline news. Wait. What?! Does Giardini even realise her character is in complete conflict with her actions? Why is everything Maggie does, so completely different to what Giardini wants the character's personality to be?

There was not one time that Maggie made a conscious decision to improving her happiness. Not one. There was no arcane glimpse of her life. Nothing. She carried on, making one stupid decision after the other. No reassessment of her scale of happiness.

Yet, when time came for to die.... Giardini chose..... A fire? A fire broke out in the building? But didn't touch Maggie (would have, cause her bedroom was nearest) but didn't cause she was off in Montréal being an idiot.

That was enough to make me pull at my hair! What is it that Giardini wants us to believe? That Maggie found happiness and escaped death by being a kidnapper? Or that life is an assortment of meaningless tragedies and series' of near escapes?

Urgh!!!

I feel that Giardini didn't put in enough effort at developing her characters. Or the plot for that matter. It irritates the living crap out of me that this book was published at all.

Lucie Bluebird says

I really enjoyed this book. Ms. Giardini's command of the English language is brilliant. Her words are like an artist's brush, and with each one she adds a new dimension to her work.

I find it interesting that some reviewers have commented on the "plot twist," because that twist is clearly laid out in the book's jacket description. I spent the book wondering what could possibly happen in Maggie's life to cause this twist.

In the end, I didn't find it so improbable. The "improbable" part relates to how the "twist" inadvertently saves Maggie's life. I was worried that Maggie might "find god" during this book, which would've ruined it for me. That, however, did not happen.

What does happen is Maggie's basic persona remains unchanged, while the character evolves just enough to find herself in unexpected ways. It's a rich, beautifully written story. I'd like to give it five stars, but if I had one complaint to make, it would be that I wasn't really able to form that much of an emotional investment in

the characters. That may have just been me, or it may be that Ms. Giardini's beautiful prose fails to allow for an emotional connection between the protagonist and the reader.

Terri says

The first half of the book was excellent. Then it took a ridiculous turn and there were all sorts of bizarre situations and actions that didn't fit with the characters personalities. Very wordy and too descriptive for the most part.

Kristin Maillard says

Another one I couldn't finish. Despite the title being compelling and the synopsis on the flyleaf somewhat interesting (a woman takes a quiz in a woman's magazine that predicts she's about to die because she's not happy enough - actually, now that I read that over again, what did I EXPECT this book to be?), the sad truth about "The Sad Truth About Happiness" is that it is, kind of, drivel.

Giardini paints some beautiful word pictures, inarguably. Like poetry. But they do nothing to move the story along. In fact, on a couple of occasions, I'd pick up the book and start reading and realize I have no idea what the book is about.

Perhaps I'm not suited to stories told in the first person. It felt like following the internal monologue of a narcissist who thinks her every observation - on the angle of light, on the facial expression of strangers, on the smell of wet wool - are worth sharing. When, at the halfway mark, she is asked out by a THIRD stranger, this one a doctor with a sports car and a boat (because the hunky hiker who approached her while she was out sweating on a Saturday morning wasn't good enough and nor was a set up via a friend with a man who actually ENJOYS university lectures - I know exactly ZERO of those in real life) I snorted in disgust and turned off the light and went to bed, resolved to start a worthwhile read the next day. I'm even self conscious about how many sentences in this review include the word "I" because I'd venture to say that more than 50% of the sentences in this book start with it. "Me, me, me, I, I, I... I think I'm happy. Am I not happy enough? Am I going to die because of a stupid quiz? Let's spend a whole book talking about me, okay?" First world problems. B-O-R-I-N-G and nauseating.

Susanne Ouellet says

I really enjoyed this book, but was left slightly disappointed with how it ended. The central character is intriguing, and full of philosophical insights. Still, it was a struggle to understand the main character's motives for her actions that control the latter part of the book, which is ultimately why I am only giving three stars.

Clare Smith says

Way too many, as in an over abundance of, or even an cataclysmic explosion of, In the manner of trillions of

brightly shining stars in the expansive and exhaustive universe; use of adjectives in this book.

Catherine at The Gilmore Guide to Books says

I so love the title of this book that I hoped the content would follow but it was not meant to be. Giardini writes simple statements in a way that catch in your mind and that should be enough but the plot of this book takes such simplicity to improbable heights. And there I was lost.

If the book had begun as a flight of fancy or whimsy with extravagant circumstances then I could have accepted it but when you contrast some one who performs mammograms and the pathos that situation can engender and mix it with what follows well, it doesn't work. I actually put the book down for a week and read other things before picking it up to finish as I believe in reading every book to the end. OK, not every book but I try really hard!

Jodi says

There was a story in here somewhere. It's a pity it never actually surfaced. I really struggled to complete it. It had interesting plot lines that, just as they pulled you in, disappeared into thin air to be replaced by a seemingly random additions to the story in most cases. The author had an incredible eye for detail and description but if was often applied to describe something not at all related to the story line. It resulted in a distraction from the story instead of adding an air of presence.
