



Where We Belong: A Novel

By Emily Giffin

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The author of several blockbuster novels, Emily Giffin's *Where We Belong* delivers an unforgettable story of two women, the families that make them who they are, and the longing, loyalty and love that binds them together

Marian Caldwell is a thirty-six year old television producer, living her dream in New York City. With a fulfilling career and satisfying relationship, she has convinced everyone, including herself, that her life is just as she wants it to be. But one night, Marian answers a knock on the door . . . only to find Kirby Rose, an eighteen-year-old girl with a key to a past that Marian thought she had sealed off forever. From the moment Kirby appears on her doorstep, Marian's perfectly constructed world?and her very identity?will be shaken to its core, resurrecting ghosts and memories of a passionate young love affair that threaten everything that has come to define her.

For the precocious and determined Kirby, the encounter will spur a process of discovery that ushers her across the threshold of adulthood, forcing her to re-evaluate her family and future in a wise and bittersweet light. As the two women embark on a journey to find the one thing missing in their lives, each will come to recognize that where we belong is often where we least expect to find ourselves?a place that we may have willed ourselves to forget, but that the heart remembers forever.

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Editorial Review

Review

“In another surefire hit, [Giffin] serves up pathos, humor, and one doozy of a twist.” *?Entertainment Weekly*

“Sharply drawn characters and finely honed sensibility add up to a story that's as bittersweet as an August evening.” *?Family Circle*

“Book clubs will have a field day with this one. Thorny mother-daughter relationships and secrets we keep from loved ones burn up the pages.” *?USA Today*

“After five charming relationship-themed hits, Emily Giffin had a lot to live up to with WHERE WE BELONG. Luckily, the author executes with a thoughtful finesse that makes this easily her best work yet. [WHERE WE BELONG] is that special type of story that takes priority over getting to bed on time. And the payoff is well worth it.” *?Boston Globe*

“Emily Giffin ranks as a grand master. Over the course of five best-selling novels, she has traversed the slippery slopes of true love, lost love, marriage, motherhood, betrayal, forgiveness and redemption that have led her to be called ‘a modern-day Jane Austen.’ With Giffin's use of humor, honesty, originality and, like Austen, a biting social commentary, this modern-day ‘woman's novel’ sits easily on nightstands and in beach bags. Even Austen would find it hard to put down.” *?Chicago Sun-Times*

“Emily Giffin's new novel about the legacy of adoption, WHERE WE BELONG, imagines what happens when an 18-year-old girl tracks down her birth mother...the latest in a string of provocative, imaginative novels that began in 2004 with SOMETHING BORROWED. All the characters [here] are on a journey to find ‘where we belong,’ and Giffin knits together their journeys with a masterly hand.” *?Seattle Times*

“Emily Giffin's WHERE WE BELONG is a literary Rorschach test. The book, while thoroughly entertaining, will also prod readers to examine choices they've made in their lives. It will compel them to muse about things they'd like to do over, to do differently, to do better...[and] gracefully examines themes of identity, family and forgiveness.” *?Miami Herald*

“Emily Giffin has a wonderful way with words. [WHERE WE BELONG] is an emotionally powerful story that will ring true with women who have given a child away and with those who grew up wondering where they came from. Giffin may be working with a premise and plot that is fairly simple, but there's nothing lightweight about the emotional turbulence she creates.” *?Ft. Worth Star-Telegram*

“[Giffin] shows that real love is messy but meaningful in this delicious, easygoing read.” *?American Way*

“[Giffin's] novels present tough moral dilemmas all related to love. And her latest, WHERE WE BELONG, is no exception and perhaps her best yet...It's a classic Giffin tale, nuanced and messy and utterly addictive, with fully fleshed-out characters who face morally ambiguous choices that aren't resolved in neat bows.” *?Austin American-Statesman*

“A breezy, yet compelling read.” *?Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

“Emily Giffin is back with another must-read summer novel!” *?Harper's Bazaar*

“The next must-read book of the summer!” ?*Star*

“WHERE WE BELONG is too suspenseful to be called chick lit and too relationship-centered to be labeled a thriller. But most readers will have little time to think of a genre for Emily Giffin's latest novel as they race through this gripping story about the reunion of a high school senior and the woman who put her up for adoption 18 years earlier.” ?*Connecticut Post*

“Giffin has a way of tugging on our heartstrings while still making us laugh out loud...[a] perfect recipe.” ?*Woman's World*

“Graceful and inviting prose, careful plotting and vivid characterizations...The coming together of two people who share a genetic heritage and little else is dramatically and emotionally risky. But Giffin makes the most of the opportunity, and WHERE WE BELONG had me riveted.” ?*Winston-Salem Journal*

“The issue about secrets isn't about keeping them. It's the reveal and its consequences. That's the challenge faced by the characters in Emily Giffin's new, briskly paced...WHERE WE BELONG. Taking a somewhat more somber tone than she did in her [previous] bestselling novels, Giffin's approach and style mature in this latest effort.” ?*Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Breezy and fun, this is definitely one for the beach bag!” ?*All You magazine*

“Giffin's latest will make you shed a few tears – and call your mom.” ?*Ladies Home Journal*

“You're sure to spy lots of pale-orange book covers at the beach this summer, as Emily Giffin releases her latest in a series of successful reads. The book has heart, meat and realistic characters.” ?*am New York*

“[WHERE WE BELONG] delivers the readable, addicting prose we have all come to love [but] delves deeper than ever before, showing that the author is capable of making her signature style work with topics beyond typical relationships. Through Marian, her daughter and the rest of those affected by Marian's decisions, the author beautifully tackles the complex issues of sex, abortion, adoption and the difficult decisions that go along with each.” ?*Woodbury magazine*

“A satisfying and entertaining read. Giffin is a gifted storyteller [and] writes smart, snappy prose that elevates this novel.” ?*Vancouver Sun*

“Believable characters, [a] page-turning plot and [an] unblinking look at the choices we make as women.” ?*WeightWatchers magazine*

About the Author

Emily Giffin is a graduate of Wake Forest University and the University of Virginia School of Law. After practicing litigation at a Manhattan firm for several years, she moved to London to write full time. The author of several *New York Times* bestselling novels, *Something Borrowed*, *Something Blue*, *Baby Proof*, *Love the One You're With*, and *Heart of the Matter*, she now lives in Atlanta with her husband and three young children.

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I know what they say about secrets. I've heard it all. That they can haunt and govern you. That they can poison relationships and divide families. That in the end, only the truth will set you free. Maybe that's the case for some people and some secrets. But I truly believed I was the exception to such portents, and never once breathed the smallest mention of my nearly two-decade-long secret to anyone. Not to my closest friends in my most intoxicated moments or to my boyfriend, Peter, in our most intimate ones. My father knew nothing of it—and I didn't even discuss it with my mother, the only person who was there when it all happened, almost as if we took an unspoken vow of silence, willing ourselves to let go, move on. I never forgot, not for a single day, yet I was also convinced that sometimes, the past really was the past. I should have known better. I should have taken those words to heart—the ones that started it all on that sweltering night so long ago: *You can run but you can't hide.*

* * *

But those words, that night, my secret, are the farthest things from my mind as Peter and I stroll down Bleecker Street following a lingering dinner at Lupa, one of our favorite restaurants in the city. After several stops and starts, winter seems over for good, and the balmy spring night is made warmer by the bottle of Barolo Peter ordered. It's one of the many things I admire about him—his fine taste coupled with his firm belief that life is too short for unexceptional wine. Unexceptional anything really. He is too kind and hardworking to be considered a snob, shunning his lazy trust fund acquaintances who accomplished “nothing on their own,” but he's certainly an elitist, having always traveled in prep school, power circles. I'm not uncomfortable in that world—but had always existed on the fringe of it before Peter brought me into his vortex of jet shares, yachts, and vacation homes in Nantucket and St. Bart's.

“Ah! Finally. No slush on the sidewalks,” I say, happy to be wearing heels and a light cardigan after months of unseemly rubber boots and puffy winter coats.

“I know ... *Quel soulagement*,” Peter murmurs, draping his arm around me. He is possibly the only guy I know who can get away with musing in French without sounding insufferably pretentious, perhaps because he spent much of his childhood in Paris, the son of a French runway model and an American diplomat. Even after he moved to the States when he was twelve, he was allowed to speak only French at home, his accent as flawless as his manners.

I smile and bury my cheek against his broad shoulder as he plants a kiss on the top of my head and says, “Where to now, Champ?”

He coined the nickname after I beat him in a contentious game of Scrabble on our third date, then doubled down and did it again, gloating all the while. I laughed and made the fatal mistake of telling him “Champ” was the ironic name of my childhood dog, a blind chocolate Lab with a bad limp, thus sealing the term of endearment. “Marian” was quickly relegated to mixed company, throes of passion, and our rare arguments. “Dessert?” I suggest, as we turn the corner. We contemplate Magnolia's cupcakes or Rocco's cannolis, but decide we are too full for either, and instead walk in comfortable silence, wandering by cafés and bars and throngs of contented Villagers. Then, moved by the wine and the weather and a whiff of his spicy cologne, I find myself blurting out, “How about marriage?”

At thirty-six and after nearly two years of dating, I've had the question on my mind, the subject one of speculation among my friends. But this night marks the first time I've broached the topic with him directly, and I instantly regret my lapse of discipline and brace myself for an unsatisfying response. Sure enough, the mood of the night instantly shifts, and I feel his arm tense around me. I tell myself it isn't necessarily a bad sign; it could just be poor timing. It even occurs to me that he could already have the ring—and that his reaction has more to do with my stealing his thunder.

“Oh, forget it,” I say with a high-pitched, forced laugh, which only makes things more awkward. It's like trying to retract an “I love you” or undo a one-night stand. Impossible.

“Champ,” he says, then pauses for a few beats. “We're so good together.”

The sentiment is sweet, even promising, but it's not even close to being an answer—and I can't resist telling him as much. “*Sooo* that means ... what, exactly? Status quo forever? Let's hit City Hall tonight? Something

in between?” My tone is playful, and Peter seizes the opportunity to make light of things.

“Maybe we should get those cupcakes after all,” he says.

I don’t smile, the vision of an emerald-cut diamond tucked into one of his Italian loafers beginning to fade.

“Kidding,” he says, pulling me tighter against him. “Repeat the question?”

“Marriage. Us. What do you think?” I say. “Does it ever even ... cross your mind?”

“Yes. Of course it does...”

I feel a “but” coming like you can feel rain on your face after a deafening clap of thunder. Sure enough, he finishes, “But my divorce was just finalized.” Another noncommittal nonanswer.

“Right,” I say, feeling defeated as he glances into a darkened storefront, seemingly enthralled by a display of letterpress stationery and Montblanc pens. I make a mental note to buy him one, having nearly exhausted gifts in the “what to buy someone who has everything” category, especially someone as meticulous as Peter. Cuff links, electronic gadgets, weekend stays at rustic New England B and Bs. Even a custom LEGO statue of a moose, the unofficial mascot of his beloved Dartmouth.

“But your marriage has been over for a long time. You haven’t lived with Robin in over *four* years,” I say.

It is a point I make often, but never in this context, rather when we are out with other couples, on the off chance that someone sees me as the culprit—the mistress who swooped in and stole someone else’s husband.

Unlike some of my friends who seem to specialize in married men, I have never entertained so much as a wink or a drink from a man with a ring on his left hand, just as I, in the dating years before Peter, had zero tolerance for shadiness, game playing, commitment phobias, or any other symptom of the Peter Pan syndrome, a seeming epidemic, at least in Manhattan. In part, it was about principle and self-respect. But it was also a matter of pragmatism, of thirty-something life engineering. I knew exactly what I wanted—who I wanted—and believed I could get there through sheer effort and determination just as I had doggedly pursued my entire career in television.

That road hadn’t been easy, either. Right after I graduated from film school at NYU, I moved to L.A. and worked as a lowly production assistant on a short-lived Nickelodeon teen sitcom. After eighteen months of trying to get lunch orders straight in my head and not writing a single word for the show, I got a job as a staff writer on a medical drama series. It was a great gig, as I learned a lot, made amazing contacts, and worked my way up to story editor, but I had no life, and didn’t really care for the show. So at some point, I took a gamble, left the safety of a hit show, and moved back to New York into a cozy garden apartment in Park Slope. To pay the bills, I sold a couple specs and did freelance assignments for existing shows. My favorite spot to write became a little family-owned bar named Aggie’s where there was constant drama between the four brothers, much of it inspired by the women they married and their Irish-immigrant mother. I found myself ditching my other projects and sketching out their backstories, until suddenly *South Second Street* was born (I moved the bar from modern-day Brooklyn to Philly in the seventies). It wasn’t high concept like everything in television seemed to be becoming, but I was old-school, and believed I could create a compelling world with my writing and characters—rather than gimmicks. My agent believed in me, too, and after getting me in to pitch my pilot to all the major networks, a bidding war ensued. I took a deal with a little less money (but still enough for me to move to Manhattan) and more creative license. And voilà. My dream had come true. I was finally an executive producer. A showrunner.

Then, one intense year later, I met Peter. I knew his name long before I actually met him from the industry and snippets in *Variety*: Peter Standish, the esteemed television executive poached from another network, the would-be savior to turn around our overall struggling ratings and revamp our identity. As the new CEO, he was technically my boss, another one of my rules for whom not to date. However, the morning I ran into him at the Starbucks in our building lobby, I granted myself an exception, rationalizing that I wasn’t one of his direct reports—the director of programming buffered us in the chain of command. Besides, I already had a name. My series was considered a modest hit, a tough feat for a mid-season show, so nobody could accuse me of using him to get ahead or jump-start a stalling career.

Of course at that point, as I stood behind him in line, eavesdropping as he ordered a “double tall cappuccino extra dry,” the matter was completely theoretical. He wasn’t wearing a ring (I noticed instantly), but he gave

off an unavailable vibe as I tapped him on the shoulder, introduced myself, and issued a brisk, professional welcome. I knew how old ...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lenore Ryan:

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