



The Great Eight

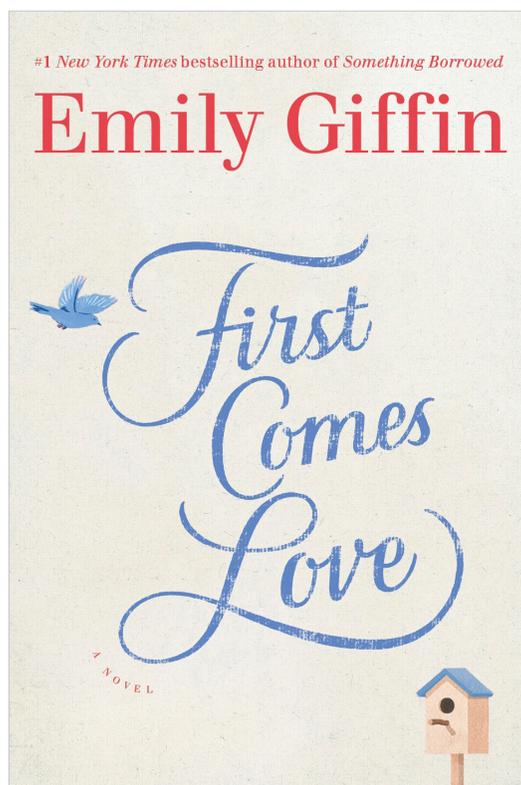
Emily Giffin has cracked the code for rom-com gold.
The bestselling author dishes on her new novel *FIRST COMES LOVE* and her craft.

Words by Vanessa Pascale
Photo Credit: Emmanuelle Choussy

Great books and films do more than entertain – they make us think, evoke a range of emotions – and can even bring us comfort. I am always in awe of brilliant storytellers. To deliver a fresh, entertaining story using words that come effortlessly, and are unobstructed by redundant adjectives and verbosity, is the hallmark of a gifted author. The flow should be natural, easy to read. Penning a novel that is alluringly clever, yet doesn't seem as though it's trying too hard, is an art – and it's one that Emily Giffin has mastered.

My best friend Marisa turned me on to Emily's novels a few years ago. As a hopeful romantic, I gravitate toward rom-coms, which is likely the reason she thought I'd enjoy Emily's books. And I did. *Something Borrowed*, the Atlanta resident's first published novel, was made into a film that is frequently on television. Starring Kate Hudson and Ginnifer Goodwin, the movie, like the book, is a hit because it's relatable. A story of friendship, love, and betrayal, we either see parts of ourselves in her characters or can imagine befriending these beautifully-flawed individuals. Emily's refined ability to capture the feelings and personalities of multiple characters makes it easy for us to connect and empathize.

As we turn the pages, we become invested in her imperfect characters' lives almost as much as our friends' lives: We root for their happiness, listen to their fears, and witness their dilemmas. The #1 *New York Times* bestselling author knows exactly how to bond us to her characters, and have us stick with them through the very last page. And once that book closes, we patiently wait for the release of her next. And it's finally here, her eighth book *FIRST COMES LOVE* (in stores June 28th). When I received my advanced copy, a number of my friends were eager to get their hands on it, and with good reason. We rely on Emily to deliver a story that captivates and her new tome proves yet again, that she has discovered the formula for literary gold.



In stores June 28th

FIRST COMES LOVE follows two very different sisters. What inspired you to write this book?

Emily Giffin: “Sister stories have always been among my favorite in fiction. From the Quimby girls in *Beezus and Ramona*, to the March sisters in *Little Women*, to Elinor and Marianne Dashwood in *Sense & Sensibility*, I am drawn to novels that explore this unique, complex, and sometimes turbulent relationship. So I was excited to write *FIRST COMES LOVE*, a story told from the alternating perspectives of two thirty-something sisters, Josie and Meredith, each facing a critical crossroads in her life, while also struggling to come to terms with a family tragedy and the secrets that surround it. The book is about the sister bond, for sure, but also about marriage and motherhood, friendship, and family. And of course, it's about love --it's always about love!”

You were a lawyer like Meredith, do you relate to one character more or are there parts of you embedded in both Meredith and Josie?

EG: “I would say both, and in some ways neither. I probably am more like Meredith, but I found her less likeable than Josie! Bottom-line, I always share something in common with my protagonists, and I think most readers will be able to relate to both characters. I hope at the very least, my readers will find empathy for what both women are experiencing.”

You walked away from litigation and moved to London to write full-time, what prompted this huge life change?

EG: “I practiced law for five years and hated nearly every minute of my professional life. But the silver lining was that misery is motivating. So after my first book was rejected, I decided I needed to make a drastic change. I quit my job, moved to London, and gave myself a one-year deadline to write another novel. Fourteen months of virtual solitude later, I had penned *Something Borrowed*.”

I read that your first novel was rejected by eight publishers, so you wrote a completely new novel which became bestseller *Something Borrowed*. Was it hard to walk away from the first novel?

EG: “It's always difficult to start a new novel --staring at a blank page is terrifying! But deep down, I knew I could write a better book, and I was ready for a clean slate and fresh start.”

Is there a *Something Blue* (the follow up to *Something Borrowed*) movie in the works?

EG: “Yes! Finally! We have a wonderful, funny script and plan to be in production soon! I really believe it's going to be even better than the first film!”

Who inspired you to write your first book?

EG: “I've always wanted to be a writer. I can recall telling my parents I wanted to be an “author” when I was in the first grade. But if I had to identify one person who most inspired my love of reading and writing, it would be my mother. Some of my fondest childhood memories are going to the library with her and my sister and the three of us reading books together on our back porch. Incidentally, my mother was also my biggest supporter when I decided to retire from the practice of law to pursue writing as a full-time career.”

Before you begin writing a novel, do you have a story already in mind?

EG: “General themes, yes. Actual concrete storylines, no. At the outset, I have a vague sense of beginning, middle and end, but for me, writing is a very character-driven process. As I get to know my characters, and the relationships between them form, the plot evolves accordingly.”

Do you tend to know where the characters will end up or does their story unfold as you write?

EG: “The short answer is no because, in many cases, the characters don't end up where I think they will. Again, it's a process of getting to know each character and creating storylines that are true to who they are. For me, it's a lot more fun to write this way, and I'm often just as surprised as the readers at the decisions my characters make. It can be an inefficient way to write, but I enjoy the discoveries along the way.”

Your books are bestsellers and are a huge hit with my friends and me (my best friend turned me on to your books), do you feel pressure to live up to your last novel?

EG: “Please thank her for me—word of mouth recommendations are so important to writers! And yes, I think every author feels a certain amount of pressure with each subsequent book. After all, you never want to hear your readers say, “Oh, this one isn't as good as her other books.” And that can create an overwhelming, almost paralyzing fear. But I think that challenge is also what motivates me. I never want to let my readers down. I always want to write a better book.”

What is your best piece of advice for aspiring novelists?

EG: “First, stop referring to yourself as an “aspiring writer.” You might aspire to get published, but you are a writer if you write... As a corollary, stop worrying that you won't be good enough, or comparing yourself to others. Don't let the idea of a novel overwhelm or intimidate you so much that you are too afraid to begin. It's like training for a marathon. Nobody gets out there and runs twenty-six miles on their first effort. It takes daily training and discipline and desire. There's no real magic to writing a novel or one method that works for all—it's just a question of attacking the project sentence by paragraph by page by chapter.” **ML**

For more on Emily Giffin, visit: <http://www.emilygiffin.com>