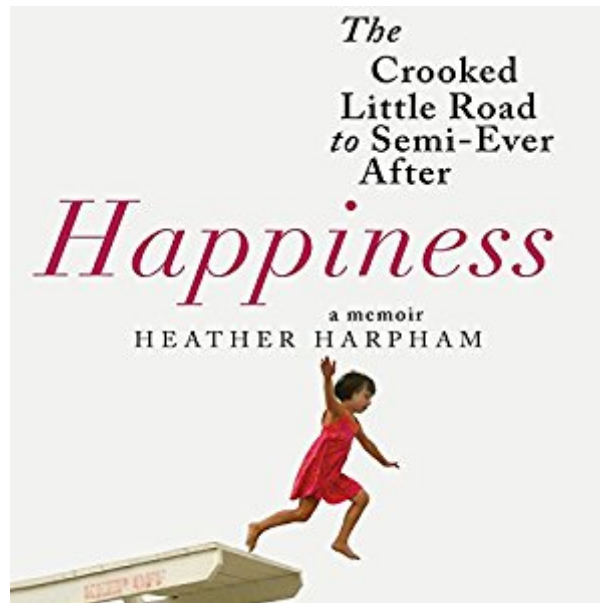


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Happiness: A Memoir: The Crooked Little Road To Semi-Ever After



Synopsis

A shirt-grabbing love story that follows a one-of-a-kind family through twists of fate that require nearly unimaginable choices. Happiness begins with a charming courtship between hopelessly attracted opposites: Heather, a world-roaming California girl, and Brian, an intellectual, homebody writer, kind and slyly funny but loath to leave his Upper West Side studio. Their magical interlude ends, full stop, when Heather becomes pregnant - Brian is sure he loves her, only he doesn't want kids. Heather returns to California to deliver their daughter alone, buoyed by family and friends. Mere hours after Gracie's arrival, Heather's bliss is interrupted when a nurse wakes her: "Get dressed. Your baby is in trouble." This is not how Heather had imagined new motherhood - alone, heartsick, an unexpectedly solo caretaker of a baby who smelled "like sliced apples and salted pretzels" but might be perilously ill. Brian reappears as Gracie's condition grows dire; together, Heather and Brian have to decide what they are willing to risk to ensure their girl sees adulthood. The grace and humor that ripple through Harpham's writing transform the dross of heartbreak and parental fears into a clear-eyed, warm-hearted view of the world. Profoundly moving and subtly written, Happiness radiates in many directions - new, romantic love; gratitude for a beautiful, inscrutable world; deep, abiding friendship; the passion a parent has for a child; and the many unlikely ways to build a family. Ultimately, it's a story about love and happiness in their many crooked configurations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I recently finished a couple of really dark memoirs and I wasn't sure that I could take on Heather Harpham's *HAPPINESS: A MEMOIR: A CROOKED LITTLE ROAD TO SEMI-EVER AFTER*. Then I thought, come on. Heather's story is incredibly difficult and what she went through during her pregnancy and immediately after her baby was born feels insurmountable. Yet, this book is living proof, that she not only survived but lived to write about it. Heather is living in New York City, dating a man, with whom she is in love. She has made it very clear to him that she eventually wants children. He has made it very clear to her that he does not. Ever. He is in his early 40s and he knows himself and this is not going to change. While away in California, visiting her family, and he has gone back to the east coast, she discovers that she is pregnant. Excited and nervous, she has to break the news to him. From this day forward, everything changes. Heather returns to the safe haven of the home where she grew up, living on her own but with the support of her incredibly loving mother, best of best friends, and the warmth of California. The sweet smell of her newborn baby immediately calms her until just hours later, what she thought was a healthy little girl turns to a life-threatening situation. One in which she and the baby spend a week in the NICU at another hospital with an undiagnosed disease, terrified not knowing if she is going to survive. This is just the beginning. Everybody has their own way of coping when facing the worst. Making tough decisions. Do you have family to lean on? Good friends who are by your side? The financial wherewithal to make a choice. Sometimes options are slim. Who can you trust? Harpham writes how can someone ask you "how do you have the strength" because you just do. How on earth she did not collapse with sheer exhaustion or question "why?" is beyond me. Instead, she shares her road map with extreme hurdles along the way, how at times she jumped to face them head on, others took some major turns, and eventually she got there.

I found myself not wanting to put the book down because I had to know what was going to happen to Gracie, And her family.

Great read, great perspective

Very well written. I couldn't put it down.

Harpham's memoir initially moves back and forth in time between her courtship with Brian, a writer she loves deeply, and the realization she is pregnant. As Harpham discovers that Brian does not

want children, she sets out to raise this baby as a single mother. The two keep in touch, and what once separates them eventually brings them together, especially as they are confronted with their daughter's life-threatening blood disorder. Diagnosed soon after birth with some form of a blood disorder (the exact diagnosis never comes), Gracie must receive blood transfusions periodically and may face a lifetime (shortened most likely) of them unless they can find a donor for a stem cell transplant. As they grapple with decisions about Gracie's health my "like" for this memoir turned to "love." I might not have picked this book up had I known it was a book about a child's serious illness. Harpham's language and emotions are ones I know well from my past, as my own daughter fought cancer at the same age as Harpham's daughter underwent a transplant. As tough as this was to read because I revisited some things I haven't had to think about in a very long time, I also appreciated how aptly Harpham put to words the thoughts and feelings I had at that time. This is a beautiful memoir for anyone who loves to read this genre, but it is also a good reminder of what in life matters most.

Can I give this book MORE than FIVE stars? It deserves more than five. This is the memoir of Heather Harpham, known as Heath and Harpo to her friends. Heather is having a romance with Brian; they have a good relationship until she becomes pregnant. Brian isn't wanting to be a father, so Heather heads home to her mother and friends in California. She goes through the pregnancy and delivery without Brian; once she delivers, the doctors note a serious problem with the baby girl. Heather and Brian have kept up their relationship through phone calls, so of course Heather calls him, hoping he'll come to California but, alas, he can't. He is emotionally unavailable in that way. Time passes and the baby continues to be ill and Brian comes through and flies to California for Heather and his daughter. This is the true story of motherhood, love and sorrow. I really loved this book and honestly - I finished it in one day! I loved Heather and her mom and dear friends; they all seem like people you can sit around with and just SIT without having to talk and without pretense. I was angry with Brian for not wanting to participate with the pregnancy and the newborn, while at the same time, I understood him when he neglected fatherhood. I highly recommend this book; make sure you have plenty of Kleenex! There are moments of pure joy and moments of deep sorrow.

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