



THE STORY BEHIND THE BOOK

A Simple Favor

A Novel

by Darcey Bell

A single mother's life is turned upside down when her best friend vanishes in this chilling debut thriller in the vein of *Gone Girl* and *The Girl on the Train*.

She's your best friend.

She knows all your secrets.

That's why she's so dangerous.

It starts with a simple favor—an ordinary kindness mothers do for one another. When her best friend, Emily, asks Stephanie to pick up her son Nicky after school, she happily says yes. Nicky and her son, Miles, are classmates and best friends, and the five-year-olds love being together—just like she and Emily. A widow and stay-at-home mommy blogger living in woody suburban Connecticut, Stephanie was lonely until she met Emily, a sophisticated PR executive whose job in Manhattan demands so much of her time.

But Emily doesn't come back. She doesn't answer calls or return texts. Stephanie knows something is terribly wrong—Emily would never leave Nicky, no matter what the police say. Terrified, she reaches out to her blog readers for help. She also reaches out to Emily's husband, the handsome, reticent Sean, offering emotional support. It's the least she can do for her best friend. Then, she and Sean receive shocking news. Emily is dead. The nightmare of her disappearance is over.

As a nursery school teacher, there is always, in the back of my mind, one huge worry: what if no one ever comes to pick up one of the children? What will I do then? How will events unfold after that? In writing *A Simple Favor*, I took that fear and transported it from the school to the home.

Or is it? Because soon, Stephanie will begin to see that nothing—not friendship, love, or even an ordinary favor—is as simple as it seems.

A Simple Favor: A Novel by Darcey Bell

9780062497772 • On Sale: 3/21/2017 • Trim: 6 x 9 • PP: 304 • Carton Quantity: 32 • \$25.99 (\$31.99 Can.)

A Simple Favor is a remarkable tale of psychological suspense—a clever and twisting free-fall of a ride filled with betrayals and reversals, twists and turns, secrets and revelations, love and loyalty, murder and revenge. Darcey Bell masterfully ratchets up the tension in a taut, unsettling, and completely absorbing story that holds you in its grip until the final page.

What inspired *A Simple Favor*?

As a nursery school teacher, I live, every day, with all the complications and tensions that go along with that time, every afternoon, when the kids get picked up, after school. I feel the children’s anxieties, their excitement and expectations; I observe which parents have become friendly and sometimes arrange to collect one another’s kids, for play dates or whatever. I know which children go home with nannies or grandparents. And I watch the relationships form among the various parents.

There is always, in the back of my mind, one huge worry: what if no one ever comes to pick up one of the children? What will I do then? How will events unfold after that? In writing *A Simple Favor*, I took that fear and transported it from the school to the home. A mother has left her child with another mother—then disappears. What then?

What can you tell readers about the characters?

I often read the various parenting blogs online—as a way of keeping in touch with what moms and dads out there are thinking and saying about parenthood. So it seemed natural to make one of my characters a mommy blogger, Stephanie. And in inventing the character of Emily, I just thought about the kind of mom who has always intimidated me—and who would do the same to Stephanie.

What was the experience of writing *A Simple Favor* like for you?

Once I had the initial idea, I just had fun—working out the plot turns, the surprises, the switches, the secrets and reveals, the dark pasts and twisted schemes that the characters are trying to hide from each other. I was surprised when things got more violent than I’d planned, but I went with it, because it seemed to be an important part of the story.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Darcey Bell was raised on a dairy farm in western Iowa and is currently a preschool teacher in Chicago. This is her first novel.

EARLY PRAISE FOR *A SIMPLE FAVOR*:

“Riveting and brilliantly structured, *A SIMPLE FAVOR* is an edge-of-your seat domestic thriller about a missing wife and mother that relies on a rotating cast of unreliable narrators to ingeniously examine the cost of competitive mom-friends, the toll of ordinary marital discontent and the fallacy of the picture-perfect, suburban family.”

— **Kimberly McCreight, author of *Reconstructing Amelia* and *The Outliers***

“This is a psychological thriller that is as hip and relevant as it is gripping. Darcey Bell somehow manages to satirize, hilariously, the ghastly self-righteousness of the online ‘Mommy Bloggers’ while at the same time pulling off a suburban mystery that ends with a twist that is as horridly satisfying as it is completely unexpected. I couldn’t stop reading about these two truly terrifying moms!”

— **Plum Sykes, author of *Bergdorf Blondes***

“What a wonderfully absorbing, unremittingly intense, endlessly surprising novel Darcey Bell has written. Her characters—in the worst way—never know what’s going to happen next and nor—in the best way—does her reader. *A Simple Favor* yields very complicated pleasures.”

— **Margot Livesey, author of *Mercury* and *The Flight of Gemma Hardy***