



## A Simple Favor

*Darcey Bell*

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**A Simple Favor** Darcey Bell

*She's your best friend.*

*She knows all your secrets.*

*That's why she's so dangerous.*

A single mother's life is turned upside down when her best friend vanishes.

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 woodsy 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.

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 Details

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## From Reader Review A Simple Favor for online ebook

### Jennifer says

Enough of a knock-off of "Gone Girl" to be annoying, and with enough additional, bizarre elements (incest? Really?) to also be annoying. Pass.

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### Alaina Meserole says

#### **Reminded me of Gone Girl, and I hated that book.**

Okay before I go into this review, I just wanted to say that when I saw the movie trailer for this I honestly wanted to read the book. I mean my love for Blake Lively and Anna Kendrick definitely intrigued me to dive into this before I go see the movie. However, after reading this.. I'll probably save my money and wait for it to come out on TV. Or Amazon.

*A Simple Favor* had an interesting concept.. but it was quite boring to listen to. I honestly zoned out so many times and was trying to predict the ending 10 minutes into the book. Spoiler alert: I came VERY close. I totally predicted a ton of shit correctly beforehand so I was very pleased with myself.

I don't even want to dive into the characters because they were so bland. I didn't like any of them (well maybe the kids but that's about it). Each person in this book was so weird, like beyond fucked up kind of weird. I didn't care about the betrayal, twists, turns, or the romance affairs. Of course everyone has baggage and a past.. but they were just meh.

Overall, I just didn't like it. I'm glad that I didn't buy the book and got a free audio from my library. I'm also glad that I didn't get a physical because I probably would've DNF'd the shit out of this.

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### KC says

I would like to thank Edelweiss, Harper Collins, and Darcy Bell for the advanced digital copy in exchange for an honest review. Stephanie, a widow with a sordid past, and Emily, a seemingly happily married woman, each have 5 year old sons who happen to be best friends. The two women appear to be best friends as well. One day, Emily asks Stephanie for a simple favor. From that moment on this story flip flops back and forth and in and out every possible psychological thriller scenario. You can not figure out which end is up, which are the red herrings, or what clues are vital to this tale's dramatic conclusion. It's fantastic to see this debut novel was written by a preschool teacher from Chicago!

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### Dylan says

1 star.

The only reason I read this was because I wanted to see the movie starring Anna Kendrick, which is coming out this fall, but after reading this I'm not quite sure I want to watch it anymore.

First off, I HATED ALL OF THESE CHARACTERS. Sure, I'm fine with some likeable characters, but with a story that's as big of high stakes as this, you need to be able to root for someone, but I was honestly rooting for the "villain" of the story because I wanted to scream every time Stephanie had page time.

This also wasn't anything special. Just think GONE GIRL....but 5 times worse.

And THAT ENDING.....I'm 100% fine with open endings, but it didn't flow well at all and just felt like the author was too lazy to finish the book.

Ugh, don't read this. It's trash.

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### **Michele Jacobsen says**

Okay....unreliable narrators (three of them, variously 1st POV throughout the novel), faked deaths, crappy marriages, incest, hidden siblings, etc should have made this book better than it actually was. In a nutshell, the story is about two best friends and one (or both?) of them is ala Gone Girl treacherous. It's got a very fast-moving plot and lots of "revelations" in which the reader is constantly presented with new information that is meant to change your mind about who is good and who is bad.

The problem? Utter cardboard cut-outs for characters. There is zero attempt to create real people that anyone could possibly identify with. It's readable, it's just very superficial and ultimately unsatisfying. If you're searching for a good thriller, skip it.

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### **j e w e l s [Books Bejeweled] says**

The only nice thing I can say about this convoluted, ridiculous and BORING hella long novel is that the author, Darcey Bell, is one lucky person. How she managed to get this stinker of a book sold for movie rights is beyond me. Maybe to the Lifetime channel, but MAJOR MOTION PICTURE starring Blake Lively, Anna Kendrick and Rupert Friend?

Unbelievable.

Maybe the movie will be done right, but if this is the story they are working from...I just don't know. Stay tuned in September 2018.

In the meantime, don't feel bad if you didn't read the book. Wait and see the movie.

UPDATE: Here's a link to the film trailer. It looks so good! I'm convinced they re-wrote this book to death.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbNgG...>

*Note: Sorry for my harshness! I just finished a Liz Nugent novel and the difference between the writing is like comparing a first grader's writing to that of a literature professor's.*

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## **Elizabeth of Silver's Reviews says**

Mothers, Friends, Secrets....Stephanie and Emily were mothers, ?they were ?friends, and they both had secrets even though they thought they knew each other better than they knew themselves.

A SIMPLE FAVOR begins when Stephanie keeps Emily's son, Nicky, after school because Emily is going to be late. But...after school turns into overnight, then after school turns ?into another day and ?another ?night, and then ?yet ?another day and another ?night with no Emily.

Stephanie didn't know where to turn except to her "mommy blog." Stephanie waits and waits and writes and writes. Stephanie finally calls Emily's husband, Sean, who was in London to tell him his wife has disappeared and that she has been keeping Nicky. Sean didn't even know who Stephanie was.

Sean doesn't seem concerned since Emily said she was going on a business trip, but the problem is that Emily never returns from the business trip.

Sean, Stephanie, and the two boys spend a lot of time with each other until they find out the truth that Emily is dead.

As we read, Stephanie places her thoughts and emotions on her blog ?and also with Sean.

A SIMPLE FAVOR keeps having secrets pop up about all of the characters both current and past.

A SIMPLE FAVOR had a unique style with Stephanie's blog taking up most of the chapters ?and all the other chapters also being about Stephanie as she lives her daily life with her son and now Sean and Nicky.? Chapters only about Stephanie change as the book continues, and the scare factor definitely moves up a few notches.

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My interest in the book was very high simply because of the wonderful writing and story line. The characters were authentic, but it was difficult to believe someone could act that way and think of ways to hurt others.

I had my doubts about Stephanie's sanity and motives and about the life she lead. Stephanie was quite gullible and insecure.

Emily was a difficult one to figure out, a character I didn't like, and a character I grew to hate. She was conniving and evil.

Sean seemed like a nice enough guy that was caught in the middle of everything.

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?A SIMPLE FAVOR is an excellent psychological thriller that kept me guessing and wondering what really was going on in the lives of the characters. ?

?Were they honest with each other, honest with themselves, or were they all just fakes?? Can we really trust or truly believe anyone?

The story line became quite intense and very good as the book continued.

The wrap up is amazing. A brilliant debut. 5/5

This book was given to me free of charge and without compensation by the publisher in return for an honest review.

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### **Anuradha says**

This is by far one of the worst books I've read. The characters are horrible - either evil and vile or such ridiculous doormats, I want to slam their faces into something. I read the book because I saw the trailer for the movie, and I can say, with conviction, I will never watch the movie. Ever. I don't want to waste any more time elaborating on this steaming pile of horseshit.

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### **Katherine says**

***”Do you think real people would ever do things like that?”***

***“Sweet Stephanie. You’d be amazed by what people will do. Things they’d never admit to anyone- not even themselves.”***

**Synopsis:** A mommy blogger with an obsession with veggie burgers decides to half-heartedly play Nancy Drew when her best friend goes missing, and chaos ensues.

#### **Pros:**

**We Are What We Blog... Or Are We?**- The one lone positive thing I can say about this book is that it does such a wickedly good job at satirizing the blogger lifestyle. Particularly the mommy blog lifestyle. Not having any kiddos or being a mom myself, I can't relate to motherhood all that well, but I do admit to reading some mommy/lifestyle blogs here and there. There can be a stark contrast between your public blogging persona and private persona you have at home, particularly when it comes to mommy bloggers. You may hate veggie burgers, but you feel you have to feed it to your kidlet because other moms will think you're poisoning your precious peanut with meat. The author did a hell of a good job showing the difference between Stephanie's mommy blogging persona and her real personality. Too good of a job, considering how awful she is.

#### **Cons:**

**NONE OF THE ADULTS ARE LIKABLE**- I would go so far to say that no one in this book is likable, but that wouldn't be true. The two little boys are just lovely and haven't been on the earth long enough to become unlikable, but it wouldn't surprise me if they turned out that way because of their fucked-up childhoods. The author is a daycare teacher, but I secretly think she hates all adults and loves all children, hence making the adults as nightmarish as possible.

The unlikable, morally gray female narrator has taken the psychological suspense/thriller genre by storm ever since the *Gone Girl* phenomenon happened. It's really hit or miss, unfortunately. You have to create a character that's pretty bad but still kind of worth rooting for. Or at least have the readers be invested in all

the horrible things they're doing. A book I read not to long ago, *The Kind Worth Killing* had one of the most deliciously sociopathic female characters I had the pleasure of reading. However, I can honestly say that in this book, all the three main players are truly awful people. Instead of gleefully delighting in their antics, you'll want to call the imaginary authorities on them to have their asses hauled off to jail. I kept flipping the pages with dread and horror, wondering what the hell they were planning to do next that would make me feel nauseous inside.

**Gullible Husband is Gullible-** Sean isn't horrible in the way that Emily is sociopathically horrible or Stephanie is hornily horrible. Sean is actually the least offensive of the characters. However, he's so damn gullible, especially towards the end. He's totally and completely manipulated by either love or lust for his wife that if she told him to drink antifreeze straight out of the bottle, he would probably do it. And the fact that he's so cowed by these two women makes him all the more pathetic.

**The Little Mommy Blogger Who Did... Everyone-** And we're talking in more ways than one. Stephanie is the mommy blogger bestie of Emily who has an aversion to meat and an obsessive love of veggie burgers. She makes her son eat them so often that I am thoroughly convinced that he will soon turn into one. She constantly goes on and on about her dead husband, even though she probably didn't have time to love him because she was busy doing the dirty with her brother (there's a difference between 'Eww, Incest' in a gleeful tone and 'Eww, Incest' with a tone of disgust. This one was the latter.) She's so horny to the point that even though her best friend is missing and presumed dead, she has wet dreams about her bestie's husband, eventually caving and doing it with him, too. **I KID YOU NOT, GENTLE READERS.** What the fresh hell is that??!!! She's just as gullible, if not more so, than Sean because she literally believes anything anyone tells her.

**Emily, Whom You'll Want to Incinerate Over the Fiery Pits of Hell-** Emily is the missing bestie of Mommy Blogger, and she's the worst offender out of the three. She's pure evil. You wouldn't want to touch her with a thirty nine and a half foot pole, and cuddling Bruce the Shark would be much preferable to ever crossing paths with her. In the case of Lily Kitner, she's awful in her own right, but there's a small sense of vulnerability you get when reading about her. In the case of Emily, you never get that from her. From stealing her mother-in-law's sapphire ring and later blackmailing her husband into keeping his mouth shut, too baiting Stephanie into friendship, to the countless other things she does that I'm not going to tell you (because spoilers), Emily makes the Grinch look like the nicest person on the face of the planet. You'll hate her guts, and not in a 'love to hate' kind of way.

**Was Stephanie Even Necessary to the Plot?-** Spoilers ahead, so beware! (view spoiler)The fact that I even think this about a main character is pretty awful.

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Intensely unlikable main characters and a nutters plot make this an unbearable, torturous debut novel that should suffer the same fate as one of Stephanie's beloved veggie burgers: be avoided at all costs.

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Ειρ?νη Βαρδ?κη says

?να δυνατ? ψυχογρ?φημα. Σκοτειν? και διαστροφικ?. Πολλ?ς φορ?ς οι δα?μονες ε?ναι ?νθρωποι της διπλων?ς π?ρτας. Σ?γουρα σοκ?ρει.

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## **Laura says**

*After the movie ended, I asked Emily, “Do you think real people would ever do things like that?”*

*Emily laughed. “Sweet Stephanie. You’d be amazed by what people will do. Things they’d never admit to anyone - not even to themselves.”*

It all begins with a simple favor. You are asked to pick up your best friend's son from school when an emergency at work arises. It all makes sense anyway because your sons are best friends too. It'll be fine because she says she'll need to see her son after such a hard day so she'll be by tonight to pick him up. What do you do if your friend never shows?

Mommy blogger Stephanie is in just this predicament. She reaches out to her blog readers for help trying to figure out if this is normal and if she should be worried all the way to asking if anyone has seen Emily. It is an interesting perspective with Stephanie having no one else to turn to. This allows a bit of introspection, a chance to see who Stephanie is and how she communicates. I've read many novels at this point that use this device, but have seen none that used it as successfully as Bell does here. Stephanie admittedly isn't always honest on her blog. This allows for an unreliable narrator in a unique way. At times Stephanie can feel a bit preachy and to be honest quite annoying. But it's all in her character and who she is.

*Many of us have shared on this blog how hard it is for moms to feel they’ve got a grip on reality - what day it is, what’s expected of us, what someone said or didn’t. Nothing is easier than convincing a mom that something’s her fault. Even when it isn’t. Especially when it isn’t.*

At times, I definitely got *Gone Girl* vibes. Not in terms of Flynn's writing, but the plot. We're given the whole is the character dead or did they run off type of story. Not to say this is a bad thing, but you know it will go one of two ways. Luckily Bell manages to throw in a few additional twists to make it a bit more unpredictable. The problem is: is it too unbelievable?

I do love my stories filled with secrets and twists. Up to a certain point, I was really enjoying the story. This one veered a bit on the suspend your disbelief side of mysteries. And that VC Andrews-esque plot line is a bit much, eh?

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## **Alli says**

Someone REALLY wanted to write the next *Gone Girl* but didn't have the talent.

I picked this up because the movie looks SO good, but the only explanation is that they have completely changed and re-edited the story. Maybe they'll have all the same names, maybe similar situations, but the actresses they got to portray these two women suggest that the script is NOTHING like this mess of a novel.

This whole thing is full of huge spoilers from this point forward

Emily disappears and Super Mom Stephanie melts down. Her best friend is missing! She reaches out via her

blog for help. You see Stephanie is a young widow and she spends her time at home, with her five year old and blogging while he's away at school during the day. She's the BEST mom, on her high horse of being a stay at home mom while her late husbands fortune keeps her in Lulu Lemons. She low keys shades and shames other moms for not be the Super Mom she is. She edits out the "real" parts of her life in order to make her candy coated blog more palatable and sanctimonious. Stephanie is the most one dimensional character I've ever had the misfortune of ready. She is truly a ridiculous person. And that is BEFORE you find out she had a torrid affair with her half brother she didn't even know existed until she was like 18 or so. And then continued to have that affair after she was married. And then got pregnant and had his child. Then her husband found out and maybe killed himself and her brother/lover/baby daddy in a car accident. And then she covered it up so she could collect insurance money so she could be a stay at home super mommy. That's all she is in the book. She doesn't even introduce herself as herself. It's not "I'm Stephanie" it's "I'm Miles' mom, Stephanie". She has no identity outside her child. And you get the idea that before that she was "Davis' wife, Stephanie" this girl never had or gets her own identity.

It's ironic when Emily goes missing and it's all a scheme to cash in a \$2million insurance policy. And Stephanie judges them for it. Emily disappears in a Gone Girl haze. A wife goes missing and there's a mysterious insurance policy out there that conveniently stupid Sean "forgot about". It's painfully obvious what is going on the moment the insurance is mentioned and it's almost criminal how dense Stephanie is about the whole thing. And when the body turns up? You KNOW there's a secret twin. It's obvious in the writing even though the book is nearly half over before it's "revealed" that Emily has a secret, druggie identical twin.

Then there's Sean. Spineless Sean who is scared of his wife and enables the toxicity of their marriage. You can tell what kind of person Sean is early on when a few weeks into his disappearance he starts fucking her best friend. But what really drives it home is the fact that his wife steals his mothers ring, her favorite thing and when he finds out he just rolls over. Don't even get me started on his reaction to the whole "I'm back from the dead and have decided to tell everyone you beat me" bullshit Emily pulled.

It was hard to know who I hated the most.

Was it Spineless Sean who was afraid of his wife and just gave in to whatever she wanted and abandoned his son to be with his crazy wife?

Was it mindless, opinionless, sanctimonious, brother fucking Stephanie?

Or was it murdering, toxic Emily who get a kick out of blowing up everyone's lives whenever possible?

The book ends with Emily basically framing Stephanie for a murder she committed (and talked Stephanie into helping her cover up). Emily originally intended to frame her husband (having Stephanie bring along Seans brush) but apparently she went from hating him to deciding to spare him and point the cops in her "friends" direction while she disappeared again, this time with her son. She literally had just gotten her job back, a huge raise and literally ran her husband out of the country but she picks up and hightailed it a month later.

This is the stupidest book I've ever had the misfortune to pick up

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## **Stephanie says**

I really need to not read books that are described as good for fans of Gone Girl, since I was not a fan of Gone Girl.

A nasty woman disappears after asking her weak-willed "best friend" to take care of her child after school. A body is later found, the nasty woman is declared dead, but then the friend starts to have her suspicions.

I was so annoyed with Stephanie- the way she talked about moms and to moms like if you are a mother you are a different species. Her blog was ridiculous. She was ridiculous. I hated that she has the same name as me.

Emily was also awful, of course, but because of the comparisons to GG, you knew that there had to be an awful, manipulative woman in there somewhere.

Just like GG, I hated the ending. I finished it because I kept hoping that the "fish" would somehow out-manipulate the manipulator, even though I didn't like her.

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### **Amanda McGill says**

I'm surprised by my 1 star rating, but reflecting upon the plot this morning, I realized that I didn't like the book at all. It was filled with unlikable characters and the plot was pretty weak if you remove all the fluff surrounding it.

Stephanie and Emily are best friends. Emily asked Stephanie one day to pick up her son after school, but then Stephanie doesn't hear anything else from Emily. A search is underway, but Emily is found to be dead. What could have made Emily go missing? Does Stephanie truly know her best friend?

So you have Stephanie, Emily and Emily's husband Sean and boy do they all suck. They all have their secrets, but their secrets don't even make them interesting. They were all flat and did pretty dumb things.

I also hated Stephanie's mommy blog that was roughly half of the novel. I didn't like the format and found it odd that people actually read it.

Sadly not the novel for me. I was however impressed that it was a debut novel.

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### **Amanda - Mrs B's Book Reviews says**

\*<https://mrsbbookreviews.wordpress.com>

How can a simple favour of picking up your best friend's son from school go so terribly wrong? This is the scenario debut novelist Darcey Bell explores in her pulse pounding psychological suspense novel, *A Simple Favour*.

Touted as a *Gone Girl/Girl on the Train* offshoot, *A Simple Favour* stands out on its own. *A Simple Favour* is a dark and twisted psychological suspense tale. This one reeled me in from the very start and it did not release its strong hold over me until the final page was turned. *A Simple Favour* was a careful read for me, one I had no compulsion to skim as every word seemed vital in solving this puzzling mystery. It is a solid effort for a debut novelist and it does not surprise me that film rights have already been purchased for this slick and compulsive novel.

*A Simple Favour* begins with the blog entries of one of the leading characters in this novel, Stephanie's life. It gives us a preliminary insight into Stephanie's world, as well as her intimate thoughts and feelings. The

presence of the blog entries is quite strong in this book, it kick starts the early stages of the narrative and appears in other chunks throughout the progression of the novel. It was a good way to set the scene. As a mum and blogger I could relate.

In addition to the blog entries as a form of storytelling, *A Simple Favour* is also told from the perspective of Stephanie, her best friend Emily, and Sean, Emily's husband. Each of these narrators airs a scent of mistrust and we are ever quite sure which character's version of the events is the truth. As the book travels along, we learn each of these characters has a background and history they would rather stayed hidden. Stephanie in particular has quite the sordid background. Emily's back story is utterly disturbing. I grappled with the fact that a person could keep a whole part of their life so hidden from a spouse and best friend. I did guess one of the plot twists involving Emily and her background. Darcey Bell has devised a first time novel that is full of twists, uncertainty and darkness. It's also how I love my psychological thrillers.

It is a little difficult to discuss much more of this novel as I do not wish to spoil the enjoyment of *A Simple Favour* for prospective readers. I will say the narrative content, the characterisation and the writing style of *A Simple Favour* worked for me. I liked how the book questioned who we can trust and our intimate relationships. What worked for me with this book was that the catalyst event, where Emily asks Stephanie for a 'simple favour', is an occurrence I could easily see happening in my own life. *A Simple Favour* presents a realistic scenario, full of possibilities.

All in all I enjoyed *A Simple Favour*. It is a jarring psychological suspense novel that has cemented debut novelist Darcey Bell on my list of authors to watch! Don't miss out on this one!

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