



## On Second Thought: A Novel

*Kristan Higgins*

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**On Second Thought: A Novel** Kristan Higgins

**Read the book that has book clubs everywhere falling in love! From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *If You Only Knew* comes an irresistible, heartbreaking novel.**

**Praise for *On Second Thought*:**

**“Higgins has perfect pitch when it comes to her upstate New York protagonists and their expanded worlds that even extend to Brooklyn. Emotional depth is seared into every page along with wry banter, bringing readers to tears and smiles. Another hit for Higgins.”—*Library Journal*, starred review**

**“A captivating read about two sisters dealing with love, loss and new beginnings. What sets this book apart is how one event changes both women's lives. Kate is refreshingly frank in her inner monologue, and Ainsley is charmingly self-aware and wry.”—*RT Book Reviews*, \*5 STARS\* Top Pick!**

**“Higgins' complex, witty characters will seem like close friends, and readers will savor each and every page as they find that love comes in many different flavors and forms. Demand will be high for the latest from this women's-fiction star.”—*Booklist*, starred review**

Ainsley O'Leary is so ready to get married—she's even found the engagement ring her boyfriend has stashed away. What she doesn't anticipate is being blindsided by a breakup he chronicles in a blog...which (of course) goes viral. Devastated and humiliated, Ainsley turns to her older half sister, Kate, who's struggling with a sudden loss of her own.

Kate's always been the poised, self-assured sister, but becoming a newlywed—and a widow—in the space of four months overwhelms her. Though the sisters were never close, she starts to confide in Ainsley, especially when she learns her late husband was keeping a secret from her.

Despite the murky blended-family dynamic that's always separated them, Ainsley's and Kate's heartaches bind their summer together when they come to terms with the inevitable imperfection of relationships and family—and the possibility of one day finding love again.

## **On Second Thought: A Novel Details**

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Author : Kristan Higgins

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Genre : Romance, Womens Fiction, Chick Lit, Contemporary, Contemporary Romance, Fiction

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# **From Reader Review On Second Thought: A Novel for online ebook**

## **Mo says**

4.5 Stars..

Really enjoyed this one. Kate and Ainsley have never been that close but tragic circumstances bring them together ... they realise that they do get on, they like each other, they have each other's backs.

Loved both characters and their interweaving storyline.

Gram-Gram - LOL. What a character!

Of course we have the obligatory dog, Ollie.

I think there was only one of her books that disappointed me a little but overall, she is an auto-buy and I usually end up enjoying them. Love her droll sense of humour.

I know I am not saying much about it but I don't want to give too much away. Just go for it. I bet you will love it too.

I shed a few happy tears at the end!

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## **Karen says**

This was my first Kristan Higgins book, and I absolutely LOVED it. How someone can take such a heartbreaking story and fill it with so many emotions, joy and laughter and then an ending that brought me to tears... I'm a little speechless. Great book.

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## **Kathryn says**

On Second Thought by Kristan Higgins was a read that I couldn't put down. I came back to it any time I had, other things I thoroughly enjoy were put aside. I was totally hooked into this book, I laughed and at times a

few tears slipped down from the sheer perfection of some of the relationships and how they worked out.

The book is told from the point of view of two sisters. Kate the older one, not long married to Nathan has found the love of her life and is hoping for a child, until the unthinkable happens and a freak accident takes him from her. She becomes the widow, encased in a grief locked inside her. Nathan's family are very much part of this story and the way the relationship with Kate develops is very interesting - especially Kate's mother-in-law.

Ainsley is the younger sister, they share the same father but not the same mother. However Candy has raised Ainsley and while Ainsley doesn't quite feel the love there, she finds a few surprises along the way. Ainsley has been in a very long term relationship with Eric, the guy with the size of an ego that blinds him. He is a total ass. Ainsley is so kind and caring and loving she hasn't really seen him for who he really is. When it all turns to custard it turns out Ainsley and Kate begin to share things never shared before and the development of their relationship is deeply satisfying.

I warmed very much to both sisters, perhaps Ainsley a little more at first, but both of them are wonderful women, finding their way together through tough times. Their extended family provide extra entertainment and Gram Gram - Candy's mother and the girls grandmother is totally incorrigible and a load of fun.

While this book is more than romance there are a couple of wonderful guys also in the story who really 'get' the women and are there for them.

On Second Thought was a delectable, delightful read - it hit all the right buttons for me, I was captivated by every part of it.

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## **Jonetta says**

Kate O'Leary Coburn is a 39-year old photographer who after four months of marital bliss finds herself a widow after her husband Nathan's sudden death. Her half sister, Ainsley has lived with boyfriend Eric Fisher for 11 years and is excited about getting engaged only to find herself unceremoniously dumped. Surprisingly, Kate and Ainsley turn to each other for support, even though they haven't ever had a close relationship.

I'm used to Higgins creating quirky, interesting characters and this story is no different in that respect. However, Kate and Ainsley's journey through their respective heartaches is one of substance as we see their relationship with each other deepen and strengthen while coming to terms with their grief and family issues.

The story is presented in the two alternating narratives of Kate and Ainsley, which really worked for me as you captured contrasting perspectives of the same events. At times, I thought that some of the minutiae presented was just that but over the course of the book, it became apparent that when combined, those details were important in the character development and to the story. Both women were so different and I liked each, especially Ainsley with her kind spirit and wonderful outlook. Their insights were revealing not only about themselves but the people important in their lives.

I really enjoyed this story and am loving Higgins' shift to contemporary fiction. There are definitely romantic elements in the story but they are not the primary emphasis. It's a rich and textured exploration of family and relationships, how they influence our choices as adults. It's a long journey (almost 500 pages) but I was sorry to let these characters go when I reached the end. (FYI, this story is loosely connected to If You Only Knew,

both set in Cambry-on-Hudson, New York.)

(I received an ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review)

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## **Susanne Strong says**

3.25 Stars\* (rounded down)

Sweet, though it failed to tug at my heart strings.

“On Second Thought” by Kristan Hannah is a story about two Step-Sisters, who were never all that close - that is until Kate’s husband of 4 months, died in a freak accident and Ainsley’s boyfriend of eleven (11) years broke up with her instead of proposing, which is what she had been expecting.

Both Kate and Ainsley are beside themselves thereafter and thankfully, they have each other to lean on. Both are so different: Kate is a Photographer, and has always been so very confident and serious, while Ainsley is boisterous and funny but has never really had any career aspirations. At 39, Kate finally got what she wanted, a husband - and then she lost everything, in what seemed like a snap of the fingers. Ainsley has only ever wanted to be married to Eric. In a mean twist of fate, he dumped her and chronicled it on a blog - for all the world to see in the most humiliating of fashions, after she nurse him back to health after a cancer scare. These heartbreaks are what brings both of these women closer together. Ainsley, takes care of Kate after the loss of her husband, cooking for her, looking after her and being there, while Kate listens to Ainsley’s problems and gives her advice.

While Kate and Ainsley go through a myriad of trials and tribulations, unfortunately I couldn’t identify with either woman, though I tried hard to put myself in their shoes in order to imagine what their situations must have been like. The character of Kate was just too reserved and cold for me to feel any emotion from her, which is why the book didn’t make me “feel” Kate’s pain or heartbreak. Ainsley, however, was much more of an emotional hot head and her feelings surged out of her like water gushing out of a fire hydrant.

As the novel progressed, both women got new chances at life - neither of which were surprising, though both were, in fact endearing, though neither romance knocked my socks off.

**For me, the best part of the book, was the relationship that was forged between Kate and Ainsley.**

While I didn’t love the novel, it was well written, easy to listen to and super cute. Ainsley is an adorable character who you can’t help but like. Her and Kate’s Gram Gram made me laugh a lot. All in all, I’m glad I branched out and decided to listen to this audiobook and thank my GR friend Melissa for her incredible review which is what convinced me to give this one a try.

Published on Goodreads and Amazon on 5.28.17.

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## Melissa says

This showstopper earned five glittery and blindingly bright gold stars from me. *On Second Thought*, Kate and Ainsley deserve them all; every single shining beauty you can see when you're far away from the lights of the city and take the time to gaze up in wonder at the night sky. That awe-inspiring feeling that miraculous sight stirs up is akin to my feelings for these easy to adore characters and their all too relatable story.

Only three books in to her extensive backlist and Kristan Higgins has proved to me her style is untouchable. Her signature way of combining hilarious inner-thoughts, witty banter, undeniable chemistry and a loveable cast of characters, all while making their issues and lives feel relatable, **tugs** on my soul. Writing with this much heart and depth is *why* I'm such an ardent reader.

What I didn't expect going in was to be gutted, like a fish. I'm talking ripped from sternum to belly button, leaving my beating heart and pile of guts exposed and vulnerable. Pushing forty, Kate *finally* has everything she's always wanted, well almost. Four months into her marriage, and armed with a stash of pregnancy tests, she loses Nathan, the one person she thought she would have forever with. What happens to him is devastating and humbling in all its simplicity.

Her younger sister, Ainsley, on the other hand, has only ever loved one man and she's eagerly awaiting that one special question. Fresh off his battle with cancer, her guy, Eric has one heck of an ego and loses touch with what's important in life. After eleven years, he decides to "*live life large*" and it's a journey he needs to do solo. . . meaning no Ainsley and no diamond. What did she ever see in him anyway?

The BIG beating heart of the story, for me, was the connection the half-sisters cultivated in their mutual devastation. There's nothing like finding someone that truly gets what you're going through, on some level, or the bonds of sisterhood. There was also a great life lesson mixed in—we *never* see ourselves the way other people do, so don't go making assumptions.

The two men that nab Kate and Ainsley post-heartbreak aren't too shabby. Honestly, I can't decide who I loved more—Daniel, the hot firefighter, or buttoned-up Jonathan—both were chock-full of surprise. The way things unfold is heartbreaking, but still sprinkled with charm, plenty of humor and that all important natural ease. And the cherry on top of the sundae . . . the achingly **sweet** conclusion. Another Kristan Higgins ending that incited a resounding *aww* from this reader.

Oh, I almost forgot to mention, Cambry-on-Hudson! This story takes place in the same classy little town as *If You Only Knew*, meaning we get a few glimpses of one of my *favorite* couples. *J + L = Bliss* \*wink\*

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## Theresa Alan says

I loved, loved, loved this book. This is exactly what I like to read—women's fiction with comedic and romantic elements. This novel delivers in every way—humor, heartbreak, complex family and romantic relationships, and characters you root for the whole way.

In chapter one, we know that Kate's husband will not live through the day. You would think a novel that begins with a loved one's death—a quirk of an accident—would not be funny, but there is a lot of humor throughout this story.

The other thing I love about this book is that it alternates between Kate's first person point of view and her sister's point of view. STEPsister, as Ainsley has been reminded time and time again by her stepmother throughout her life.

In part because Kate is several years older than Ainsley and in part because they have very different personalities, they've never been that close. But when Kate's husband dies and Ainsley's boyfriend of eleven years decides not to propose to her at long last but to break up with her, the two shattered sisters come together to help each other survive their mutual heartbreaks.

Much of the humor comes from the character of Gram-Gram, their octogenarian grandmother who gets a Tinder account and prowls wakes to make her move on newly widowed men.

Both Kate and Ainsley are likeable characters in their own way, and how the plot unfolds is not predictable—I hate when I can figure how things will end way before I actually finish the last page, and this book does not disappoint in that regard.

The writing is wonderful—I definitely recommend this for fans of women's fiction.

Thanks to Netgalley and HQN for the opportunity to read an advance copy of this book.

For more of my reviews, please visit: <http://theresaalan.net/blog/>

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## Jennifer says

★★★★½

On Second Thought is a standalone, women's fiction novel written by the fabulous Kristan Higgins. In my opinion, this would be an ideal read after experiencing the perfection that is *If You Only Knew* – at least this is the order I followed due to publication dates and the fact that we get a few cameos from the former's MC's. Yay!!! But other than that, *On Second Thought* stands on it's own and it's just as good (well a close second place at least). It features alternating POV's from two half-sisters who are both facing individual heartbreaks. Their grief is real! ...and one thing I loved about these parallel portrayals is that Ms. Higgins shows that loss is loss whether the person you're mourning is still alive or gone. The grief, confusion, and anger (and all the underlying stuff) are the same and all are valid.

Similar in style to *If You Only Knew*, Ms. Higgins takes these heavy emotions and incorporates hilarity, family issues, romance, a villainous “other woman”, and another mysterious hero. This familiar setup is in no way repetitive or distracting, but again shows that Ms. Higgins wins at her storytelling capabilities. It's got laugh-out-loud scenes, a memorable man-hungry grandma, an eye-rolling narcissistic ex, some super sweet moments, sexy times, and soul-splitting heartbreak. Without the dark, we'd never see the stars, right? Check it out.

### My favorite quote:

*"Sometimes, a smile was the bravest act of all."*

Note: In an online interview located [HERE](#), I found the following piece of information about the author which might explain how she can describe and show emotional responses so well:



"Kristan often tells stories of loss and does so with verisimilitude. This is in part due, perhaps, to her personal history. Her father was killed by a drunk driver when he was 47 and Kristan was 23. Her mother never remarried and the theme of losing a great love and being afraid to risk such heartbreak again permeates many of Kristan's books."

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### ♥Rachel♥ says

[ the emails. That was totally inappropriate even though he did refuse and shun, he should've responded more finally, and he should've been more level with Kate before they married. I can totally understand why she took comfort with Daniel. I only wish Brooke wo

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### Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

\*4.5 stars\*

One time might be a fluke but two times? I'm in LOVE!

**Kristan Higgins blew me away** with another book set in the fictional New York town of Cambry-on-Hudson. I absolutely adored my first ever Kristan Higgins book, *If You Only Knew*, and this one was **just as magical**.

I have a little bit of trouble classifying the genre of these two recent Kristan Higgins books because they straddle the line between women's fiction and contemporary romance. Honestly, it doesn't matter what box you put them into because, bottom line, **they take the best elements from both genres**. We get the focus on family dynamics and two individual women's personal, introspective journeys from women's fiction, but we also get the heart-melting love-stories that I crave from romance. **It shouldn't work so effortlessly and seamlessly, but it does. Kristan Higgins makes it look easy.**

One of the main struggles of a romance author is to get the reader to buy into the romance. That's surprisingly hard to do, especially with "showing" instead of "telling." However, Kristan Higgins does it with not just one, but two characters in this book. Still, this book isn't simply about two people falling in love. It is MUCH more complex than that.

What I loved most about this story was how nothing is perfectly straightforward. There is pain and loss, there are conflicting and confusing emotions, and people are not who they seem at first. That is because **these characters are real and flawed**, especially the supporting characters, and that is what makes this book come to life. The former lovers and exes... you *get* them, even when you want to simply hate them. There are no evil villains or two-dimensional characters. I loved that.

There were also a few tropes that are weaknesses of mine, mainly the enemies-to-lovers trope. Gah, I love that one. I think a quiet, awkward man falling into love just does something to me. It reminded me a little of *Pride and Prejudice*, which is never a bad thing.

Also, I love a kooky grandma character. Gram gram was the *best*.

What impressed me even more about this story is that even when an author has great ideas, he or she still has to *execute them*. To make a book flow smoothly and be compulsively readable is extremely difficult. However, Kristan Higgins pulled that off too, and **I couldn't put this book down for a minute.**

This book is everything that I wanted First Comes Love by Emily Giffin to be but wasn't. **It is a story about two sisters, a story about evolving families, a story about falling into and out of love, and a story about realizing that what you thought you wanted might not be what you needed.** It is both heart-warming and heart-breaking while still maintaining its humor.

Honestly, it's a must-read.

\*Copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review\*

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### ♥Sharon♥ says

Gosh, I am so happy I ended up loving this one. I wasn't sure I would. I had made it to the 35% mark and I wasn't getting the I LOVE IT feeling like I did with the other books I have read by her.

I was feeling so sad by what was happening and I didn't like that feeling. But then it happened. The magic that KH pours into her stories bubbled to the top and I found myself smiling, laughing and shedding tears just like I have with her other books.

♥'d Ainsley

♥'d Kate

♥'d Jonathan - He was one of my favorite characters in the book.

♥'d Daniel

♥'d Gram-Gram - What a hoot she was.

And I absolutely **LOVED LOVED LOVED** the Epilogue. ♥ ♥ ♥

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### Dani C. (Paulette's Papers) says

I will admit the two reasons I picked up this book was the cover (I love purple tulips) and the author (I love Kristan Higgins). I didn't read the synopsis which is not normally something I do. I just knew based on who the author is and the lovely cover that I would enjoy this book.

I was right.

I honestly hate books the switch between characters each chapter yet Ms. Higgins made it work. We get a chance not only to see what each sister is going through but we also see how they view their sister's own life and struggles. In the end these two not only become stronger sisters they also become more like friends. It is sad, it is sweet and at time humorous they live these two unique women live but it is all relatable. By the time the book was over I could see myself wanting to be friends with both Kate and Ainsley.

I started reading *On Second Thought* on a Saturday afternoon and by 2:00 am the next morning I had finished their journey. This is one book I found difficult to put down and I think you will as well.

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### **Brandie says**

I'd give this book endless stars if I could. I absolutely loved every minute. It was perfect in every way!!

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### **BookLover says**

**One of my favourite reads so far this year! Wow.** My heart actually ached a little bit while reading this. I felt bereft and gutted. Such an emotional story. Again, like with *If You Only Knew*, we get two stories in one - *half* sisters Kate and Ainsley, each telling their point of view during a devastating time in their lives. (And coincidentally told in the same community as *If You Only Knew* with appearances from many of the characters in this book, a real bonus for me.)

I'm not really sure what I could write about this book to do it justice. Like other Kristan Higgins books, it was filled with fantastic characters, humour, sadness and a wonderful story to be told. This story had a much more serious tone, given the premise. Kate, newly married, had become a widow around the same time her sister, Ainsley's long-time boyfriend had broken Ainsley's heart. Even so, there was still lots of humour and touching moments.

I immediately felt soothed when the Ainsley moved in with Kate after her break-up. The comfort they were able to provide, each in their own way, was tangible and made my heart smile. The relationship they formed, having never been close growing up, really made the story for me.

I couldn't help but bond with Ainsley, who never quite felt wanted enough her entire life. I was pleasantly surprised at her strength in the face of having her planned future ripped out from under her. In the beginning, when Eric, her boyfriend, was introduced, I had no idea how his self-centred personality would play into Ainsley's story. He was such a douche-canoe and I cringed the whole way through everything he put Ainsley through, while laughing and smiling at her coping mechanisms. Her transformation, if you will, was brilliant!

**“Okay, I’m really leaving. I want to ride this wave of moral indignation.”  
He grinned then, and I couldn’t help it, I smiled back.”**

Kate, having been through a whirlwind relationship that led very quickly to marriage, only to become a widow a few months later, never had the chance to gain solid footing in her new community and new life. I felt gutted for her, giving up her home, city and moving her entire life to a new place only to have the reason for the move be taken away. The insecurity she felt was heartbreaking. Besides getting through the day to day, I had no idea how she would move past the grief.

Jonathan, Ainsley's serious boss, was a great character in this story. Mr. Darcy is thrown out there several times as a point of reference and I found it quite fitting. In true Kristan Higgins style, he really did take a

back seat to the strong female personalities in the story, thought.

**“What made you happy?” he asked. Once again, I had the impression that he was data-gathering so he could report back to his home planet. But that was just his way, maybe.”**

Daniel, dubbed “*Daniel the hot firefighter*”, with his string of insignificant women, was hilarious and such a great friend to Kate. His love for this family was such a contradiction for the “casual” guy Kate observed over the years and I just knew there was so much more to him that met the eye.

**“Okay, okay,” he said, sliding onto his knees in front of me. “Let’s see if you can answer a few questions. Put your head down and try not to pant, that’s a good girl.” I did, feeling his hand on my shoulder. “That’s it. Nice and slow. What color panties have you got on?” My head snapped up. “What?” He pushed my head back down. “Answer the question. Or I could check for you if that would be easier.” “Aren’t you supposed to ask about—hehn—the President?” “I don’t care about the President’s underwear. What color are yours? Throw me a bone and say a red thong.”**

I’m going to have a hard time starting another book, such is my epic book hangover right now. **Sigh, such a great read!**

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**Jennifer Kyle says**

**4.5 STARS**

This is my first book read by this author and her writing and in particular her sense of humor was a perfect fit for me! This story is told in the povs' of two sisters, Kate and Ainsley. Who through tragedy and loss, become closer.

The two different circumstances in both women’s lives devastates and then leads them on a path for both heroines to second chance at romance. My only complaint is the cover for this book. The title is perfect, but the cover is just too bland for what is held within the pages. There’s heartbreak, humor, family, and love all of which is so well done.

Both sisters’ hearts are broken...

One sister...

*"It's true. Our life is not the one I want."*

The other sister...

*"I'm a fucking widow now."*

I also loved how on their journey through grief and second chance romance (with two very yummy men) their bond as sisters is cemented.

It's all timed perfectly and beautifully with characters to root for. This definitely won't be the last book I try by this author I'm excited to start going through her work in the coming months. Yet is it weird that years from now Eric will stand out from this book? What a piece of work he was very memorable as that for sure!

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