



Back to the Good Fortune Diner

Vicki Essex

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Everville, New York — it's the town where Tiffany Cheung grew up, and the last place she wants to be. But after losing her job in Manhattan, that's exactly where she finds herself. Worse, she's working at her family's Chinese diner and feeling like the outsider she once was. The only bright side is that Chris Jamieson, the boy she used to tutor, is still around. Her high school crush is hotter than ever, and he needs her help... again. Tutoring Chris's son is the perfect temporary job. Except, Chris finally seems interested in her — and is hinting about a less temporary arrangement. Talk about bad timing! Because Tiffany's not staying and nothing will stop her from getting back to her real life. But maybe what's *real* is about to change....

Back to the Good Fortune Diner Details

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From Reader Review Back to the Good Fortune Diner for online ebook

PointyEars42 says

[She lands the big-city job he *knew* she was looking for and how does he react? "...Go. Live your life, or whatever it is you think you're doing. Just do me a favor and stay out of mine from now on." He's doing the equivalent of slut-shaming her: making her feel like she's being stupid &

Lisa says

After being evicted and fired, Tiffany is back home in tiny Everville. She's mortified to be working at her family's diner again, and desperate to pay off her debt and get back to her dream life in publishing. To that end, she takes a side job tutoring the son of the man she tutored in high school. The man she still has a crush on, of course. Chris is determined that his son not be stuck on the farm like he was, and to get away he will need a college education, so when he finds out Tiffany is back in town, he immediately runs her down and begs her to tutor Simon. Spending time with Tiffany again makes him realize how little he knew her back in high school, and he's suddenly very interested in getting to know her better. But what will happen when Tiffany finally is back on her feet?

Back to the Good Fortune Diner has a great premise. It's not really a reunion story, as they were never even friends, let alone a couple, and it's not a story of complete strangers either. In the introduction, the author explains that she has the same Chinese- American heritage as Tiffany, and that she wanted to write a story from that perspective as well. I thought both of these things would be fascinating. Unfortunately, I was wrong on both counts. It wasn't completely awful, but there's really no part of it that I'd recommend to anyone else.

First, the romance. Tiffany has a huge crush on Chris, and always has. She's completely unable to even look at him, let alone talk to him, without being speechless at how incredibly HOT he is. Every. Single. Time. There's no past history basis for this- Chris wasn't mean to her in high school, but he didn't see her as a person either, and he wasn't a hero for any other reason. He's just hot. Oooo-kay then! About midway through the novel, Chris realizes he never gave her a chance to have a personality in high school, so he asks her out to dinner. This is a bit more believable, but honestly, I didn't really see them getting to know each other now either. They just suddenly become a Thing. And the entire time Tiffany is still struck dumb by his beauty. I never saw a progression of romance, or a falling in love, or even a sexual tension that went both ways. Having sex does not a romance make.

Second, the cultural aspect. I'm from South Dakota by way of Alabama. I don't have a ton of experience with different cultures beyond knowing the stereotypes. I could have written this. There wasn't one part of Tiffany's experience growing up Chinese-American that I found to be surprising or illuminating. I don't want to cast doubts on the author's upbringing, but honestly, it was just like she included all the stereotypes and called it good. Perhaps, as a white person, I shouldn't even go here, and I wouldn't mention it if SHE hadn't mentioned it first, you know? Anyway.

As a whole, just skip this one.

Disclosure: I received this from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Jen says

Tiffany Cheung has had a string of bad luck: she has no job, no apartment, and no car. She balks at moving back home and working at her parents diner – which is Good Fortune in name only, in her opinion. Not only does her family have a certain high standard that they expect her to live up to, but she has set some pretty high ones for herself as well. She doesn't get a thrill from working in a diner like her brother, Daniel, saying to him at one point: "I hate that after all the work I put in, this is where I'm at. I was supposed to be an editor at a publishing house by now. But here I am, thirty-two and back living with my parents." But then she reconnects with Chris (high school crush) who hires her to tutor his son, Simon. And guess what? The crush is alive and well. There are goosebumps and sparks and racing pulses, oh my.

Okay, so it's not as if I haven't read this type of book thousands of times - former high school weirdo/nerd returns to small town and finally scores big with the quarterback hottie, yet *Back to the Good Fortune Diner* still managed to feel fresh. Not to mention *refreshing*. I'm not gonna lie - I get tired of reading about white people. The story resonated with me because I could understand not only how it felt to be the only (or one of few) POC in a predominantly white environment but also how it felt/feels to be an awkward individual in general. Sometimes being a combination of the two feels downright tragic (please watch *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl* if you haven't already).

Tiffany's self-preservation tactics tickled me; she's crushing on Chris big time but gets all Ice Queen when she's around him, giving the appearance that she couldn't care less when that couldn't be any further from the truth. Chris has always been pretty popular with the ladies so watching him squirm was entertaining; his attempts at flirtation with her in the beginning are awkward but their initial interactions still manage to crackle with sexual tension. By the time Tiffany started letting down her defenses, I was relieved although not entirely convinced that she could loosen up so entirely around Chris in such a short period of time. But nevermind that, I quite enjoyed her "propositioning" him using kittens as bait. And that gravy/French fry scene? I actually clutched my pearls and said, "Dang."

I completely bought Tiffany and Chris' attraction, but the love? Not so much. It was too much, too soon. And don't even get me started on Chris' father, whose transformation from racist to introspective, empathetic human being was a bit of a stretch. How nice for Tiffany, that a well overdue talk-down to a big bully magically relieved him of his ignorance. I wish.

Despite that, I still enjoyed *Back to the Good Fortune Diner* and hope to read more by Ms. Essex.

3.5 stars.

Metaspinster says

I think I'm dnf-ing this one, and yet I'll probably try this author again. Because there were things I did like about this book, in particular the author's willingness to write outside the genre lines by including stuff like an interracial romance in which race is actually an issue, organic farming, thrift stores and surly teenagers. But I had a hard time accessing the heroine and her "issues." I guess I needed more nuance and real, messy

vulnerability. Also, is it just me or do previously non-sexually liberated people who decide to actively pursue a "friends with benefits" thing because they're afraid of their true feelings only exist in Romancelandia?

Sigh, I think I just need Romancelandia and the world as I know it to overlap more - and that goes both ways! But anyway.

Alex says

At First Sight: After losing her apartment and job in New York City, Tiffany Cheung was left with no other option but to return home to Everville, where she's stuck living with her parents, having to work (at least some of the time) at the family's diner The Good Fortune, and with a mountain of debt.

Tiff never wanted to come back to Everville, where she always stood out for being Chinese - even if she wasn't really teased, she certainly was largely ignored by her classmates - and where there is no much to do.

Chris Jamieson was Everville's golden boy - star of the football team and with a college scholarship - but these days his time is divided between running his family's farm, fighting with his father over how to run the farm and fighting with his teenage son Simon over his lack of interest on his future.

When he learns that Simon has failed English, Chris turns to the one person who helped him make sense of Shakespeare when he was in high school: Tiffany, who tutored him and helped him to get that scholarship.

Running into Chris was not in Tiffany's plans, let alone when she's so down her luck and he's still as handsome as he ever was and her crush on him never really went away. Agreeing to tutor his son was not in her plans either but at least its a job where she doesn't have to wear a hairnet.

Besides, it's only a temporary thing, and the moment she gets another job in New York City she's moving back, and Chris's sudden interest in her is not changing her plans.

Second Glance: I read Back to the Good Fortune Diner because for the SBTB's book club and all in all it was a pretty good read.

I enjoyed the setting - upstate New York - and the tid bits both about farm life and running the diner. I genuinely liked Chris and his son Simon and a host of other characters like Tiffany's brother Daniel and his girlfriend Selena and their grandmother. I loved the grandmother, she reminded me of my own.

But the book did have a flaw: Tiffany. Tiffany was so not a likable character, she was so ashamed of her family and of her heritage - she eventually comes to better terms with it, but it was too little too late for me - and I couldn't see what Chris saw in her. She was a bit of a snobby bitch when she first comes back to town.

The parts where I liked her the most were when she was tutoring Simon, but the rest of the time I didn't like her. Also, her dream to work in Publishing but you never really get a sense of why, and you don't see her enjoy her job so that whole part of the book felt a bit like a cope out.

Not exactly a minus but Daniel and Selena's story took over a lot of the book, it wasn't bad - it was actually pretty interesting - but it did take away from the main couple. Also, I didn't like Tiff and Daniel's parents either.

Bottom Line: When all is said and done, I liked Back to the Good Fortune Diner, and I really enjoyed Mis Essex's style of writing, but I didn't like all aspects of the story the same, I didn't like the heroine and I would have liked a little more romance for the main couple. I will probably read this author again, though.

Jojo says

I should probably know better than to read woman-forced-to-return-to-small-hometown romances because I never like them, but I tried this one anyway. Should've skipped it. Didn't connect with the characters, didn't care for the plot, didn't believe the romance. When it feels like all the other characters are guilt tripping the main character into getting into a serious relationship and giving up her dreams, I am not going to love it. I would have liked this book a lot better if the romance had actually just ended up being a fling before Tiff got back to her life.

Not for me, but if this type of story appeals others might find things to like here.

Rebekah Weatherspoon says

Back to the Good Fortune Diner was a lovely book. I don't read many Harlequin romances and I tip-toe around interracial romances because I don't enjoy being slapped in the face by racial stereotypes during my free time. This story has both a great interracial couple and realistic cultural elements that highlight their differences.

Tiffany Cheung travels a path I think a lot of 20/30 something year olds can relate to these days. She's armed with a degree, but not working in her desired position. She has big dreams, but can't seem to get things on track to please herself or her family. Her parents own a Chinese diner in a small, mostly white town. The family is doing well, but after being a loner growing up, Tiffany longs for a life in publishing in NYC. Returning to this small town to deal with her parents strict standards and bickering, and the way they pit her against her brother is the last thing she wants, but broke woman's gotta do what a broke woman's gotta do. I really enjoyed Tiffany as a character. We see her experience a full range of emotions, but none of the scenes are bogged down with internal monologue.

Chris Jamieson (Or Chris Hemsworth for fantasy purposes) is a single father running his family farm with his father, William and his son, Simon. Chris was off to college when he found out his hs sweetheart was pregnant. He returned to raise his son. His ex-wife is now out of the picture. Chris isn't your typical high school jock turned farmer. He's smart, and an environmentalist and thank sweet Jesus, he doesn't like Tiffany just because she's Asian. Tiffany tutored Chris in high school, a time in her life when she was very withdrawn socially. Now that they are both single and more mature adults, Chris wants to get to know her better. His feelings develop naturally and he is careful to consider Tiffany's role in his son's life before taking things further. He's not thinking with his cock.

Tiffany has different experiences with all 3 of the Jamieson men. A nicely balanced romantic relationship with Chris, a teacher/mentor relationship with Simon, and a woman of color vs a racist bigot relationship with Will. Will reminded me of Cotton Hill from King of the Hill. He's racist comments felt real and were

spread out into the plot where the reader gets to see how his attitude effects not only Tiffany, but his son and grandson.

There's also a side plot with Tiffany's brother, Daniel. He's coming at the same issues from a different direction. He's happy to please his parents, but hanging in there with them in the family restaurant is ruining his love life.

All in, the relationship between Chris and Tiffany was well done. The sexy times, though, brief were steamy. The relationship between both families, internally and with others, was well done. The "moral" of this story is finding the right place for yourself, not the place you THINK you should be. I would definitely read more about these characters :)

Ash says

I was bored for most of this book. I kept hoping that would change but it never did.

Kaetrin says

3.5 stars, rounded up.

Why I read it: I picked this one up from NetGalley.

What it's about: (from Goodreads) Everville, New York — it's the town where Tiffany Cheung grew up, and the last place she wants to be. But after losing her job in Manhattan, that's exactly where she finds herself. Worse, she's working at her family's Chinese diner and feeling like the outsider she once was. The only bright side is that Chris Jamieson, the boy she used to tutor, is still around. Her high school crush is hotter than ever, and he needs her help... again. Tutoring Chris's son is the perfect temporary job. Except, Chris finally seems interested in her — and is hinting about a less temporary arrangement. Talk about bad timing! Because Tiffany's not staying and nothing will stop her from getting back to her real life. But maybe what's real is about to change....

What worked for me (and what didn't): This book generated a bit of buzz on Twitter and among my blogger friends because it has a Chinese-American heroine and race is one of the themes of the book. Sometimes (many times?) it seems to me that ethnic/biracial characters could just as well be Caucasian - by that I mean to say that often different race is not portrayed as difference. Partly, I wonder whether it is because there is a "we are all the same" idea about anti-discrimination, but I also wonder if it is authorial/editorial fear that books with characters that are "too different" won't sell well. In fact, there have been a few posts which seem to suggest that it is the case that such books don't sell well. I'm not sure what that says about the romance reading public.

In this book however, the differences about the typical middle class white upbringing and experience and Tiffany's Chinese-American upbringing (in small town USA no less) are part of the theme of the book. Tiffany couldn't wait to get out of Everville. She hated being the a member of the only Chinese-American family in town. Her reaction to the racism - both casual and vicious - she experienced as a schoolgirl meant

that when she moved to New York City, not only did she have no plans to return (except for the occasional brief visit) and she turned her back on much of her heritage - even to the point of not eating Chinese takeout.

Part of the book and one of the parts which worked best for me, was witnessing Tiffany slowly accept her difference and embrace her heritage. By the end of the book, I felt she no longer cringed at the cultural differences and actively celebrated it. Seeing her finally stand up to curmudgeon William (father of hero, Chris) was something special. (Although, William's turnaround at the end felt a forced and not as genuine as his racism and general bad temper.)

Tiffany was a difficult character to like however. She was prickly and sharp and critical and often rude. The thing that saved her for me was that I knew what was going on in her head and it was mostly much different to what she was saying. But how Chris would ever have known that and why he persisted in the face of monosyllabic answers and blunt-to-the-point of rude responses still mystified me.

Tiffany had crushed on Chris during high school when she'd tutored him in English, assisting him in winning a scholarship to Berkeley. (Chris was oblivious to Tiffany's attraction to him. I can't blame him for that - she hid it extremely well.) But, seeing the woman she has grown into, Chris finds himself attracted and intrigued. Back in town, after being laid off from her job and evicted from her apartment, Tiffany is in desperate need of money - so she can head back to New York. She never has any intention of staying in Everville and this is made abundantly clear throughout the story. So, when Chris approaches her asking if she will tutor his son, Simon, she accepts the position gratefully.

Chris lives on the family farm, which he now runs as fully organic, with his son and his father. Chris' high school girlfriend, Daphne, found herself pregnant and he dropped out of college to come home and marry her. Chris' father was in a tractor accident and lost his leg and Daphne left, they divorced, she remarried and moved to California. She barely has anything to do with Simon. All three men are scarred by the Daphne's actions and this affects how they embrace Tiffany's entrance into their lives.

“The last time he saw her was on his twelfth birthday. She flew up from California—that’s where she is now—and we drove out to meet her in the city. She gave him his gift and we took him to a ball game. But she didn’t stay for more than a night. She said the air quality was hurting her sinuses, and she flew home the next day. I’ve never seen Simon so disappointed in all my life.”

“I’ve known other people with killer migraines like that. She must have been going through hell.” To Chris’s surprise, she said it without a trace of sarcasm.

He laughed, low and flat. “I was kind of hoping you’d come out and say what I won’t.”

“Well, I was trying to be sympathetic, but all right. She’s a selfish bitch and you and Simon deserve better.”

Coffee nearly spewed through his nose. “And you didn’t even blink,” he gasped out as he recovered from laughing.

“I have issues with parents who don’t take responsibility,” Tiffany said without a trace of remorse. “If she’d really cared, she would have seen him anyhow. Or gotten help. Or done something. Migraines don’t last two weeks, or for that matter, three years.”

Simon is full of teenage angst and some of the reason for this remains a mystery to me (I don't pretend to understand teenage boys) and his turnaround (in relation to Tiffany) seemed unexplained to me. Even when

he was telling his dad why Tiffany "gets him" I didn't get it.

However, I liked that Tiffany didn't take attitude from Simon and her inner dialogue about some of his antics amused.

"...Sometimes I have to wake up at dawn to get things done so I can finish my homework at night. I barely have time now, working with you."

Was that supposed to be a guilt trip? He obviously hadn't ridden the Cheung family express, which made regular stops at Shameville, Honor Town and Duty City.

Daniel, Tiffany's brother, has a secondary romance in the book and for me, he kind of stole the book for me. I felt for him so much, being the loyal son who stayed and worked in the diner, who looked after his parents, who put his own life on hold. Selena, his long distance girlfriend is a doctor in New York. Not only is she not Chinese, she earns more than he does and he doesn't know how to reconcile his picture of the "ideal wife", his family obligations, his self-worth. I found myself identifying more with him than with Tiffany.

Family obligation is a strong theme in the novel - with both main characters, with William and Chris both having to do some letting go regarding Simon's choices and in relation to the Cheungs. Those family obligations were so strongly represented and the challenges for Daniel and Tiffany were so great, it was disappointing that much of it was left up in the air at the end. I think that it could be said that there are no easy answers and not everything has to be wrapped up in a neat bow (even though I like it to be) and that is absolutely true. But in Daniel's story arc in particular, it was something which I felt needed to be more fully addressed, even if only to make it clear what challenges lay ahead. It's possible that's my distaste for any kind of ambiguity/lack of clarity showing however.

I wasn't sure there had been enough set up to explain/make me satisfied with Tiffany's actions at the end of the book. I felt there was a quick turnaround and I wasn't sure what she was going to do career wise at the end. I appreciated that Chris was prepared to make changes too, and I did feel that it would be easier for Tiffany to uproot herself (mainly because she had no roots in New York) than for Chris. Nevertheless, why is it always the girl making the changes?! I wasn't sure what she was going to actually do at the end. Her character had been set up as someone who needed a plan and this lack felt off to me.

The book left me with a greater appreciation of growing up ethnically different in a white society (something I have no experience of personally of course) and I enjoyed Ms. Essex's writing style. Some of her descriptions tickled me - they were amusing and apt, like this one:-

...he spotted a mangled vehicle in the garage. It looked like a giant had clapped the car between its hands. The side-view mirrors dangled off both sides like sad bunny ears."

There was a lot to cover in this book and I felt some things which needed more page time were left. For example, Chris and Simon's relationship improved over the course of the book, but much of Chris' changed behaviours was off page and inferred.

Still, there was a lot to like and I'm glad I read it. I'll happily read another book by this author.

What else? Can I just say I've had second degree burns (green tea) and I was in hospital for nearly a week so the experience of the same injury to one of the characters in the book didn't ring true to me. The pain was horrendous. The character was discharged the same day and the injury was barely mentioned again, which

seemed odd to me.

I really liked the writing voice and I enjoyed the book but there were many things left unexplored and not fully realised in my opinion. I think Daniel and Selena's story could have been a whole book in itself and I have many questions about what happens after the story finished - to Chris and Tiffany, at the Good Fortune Diner, to Daniel and Selena. I could have used another chapter or two to bed it all down.

Grade: B-

<http://kaetrinsmusings.blogspot.com.a...>

Ridley says

I liked a lot about this book. The characterization in particular was excellent. Everyone had a personality, insecurities and quirks that were their own. Both the hero and the heroine had difficult relationships with their respective families and, as is typical of Superromance's issue-driven books, trying to live up to their parents' expectations while living their own lives their way drives much of the conflict in the book. It's a conflict that I found easy to relate to, and I really enjoyed seeing how these people navigated it.

What I didn't really enjoy was the fairy tale dust the townspeople all put on their Cheerios in small town contemporary romances. Everyone they meet is smiling, cheerful and so happy to have escaped the city for the wonderful countryside. I also grew frustrated with the flimsiness of Tiffany's dilemma. She wants a job in publishing so as to not waste her English degree. What I didn't understand is why she had to give up Chris and live in NYC to have it. I mean, yes, that's the most obvious path, but she never even entertains the idea of freelance editing or looking for a position that allowed her to work remotely. The book needs this to be a zero-sum situation, and I didn't see it that way.

Rachel Brand says

GENRE: CONTEMPORARY ROMANCE

PUBLISHER: HARLEQUIN

PUBLICATION DATE: JANUARY 01, 2013

RATING: 4 OUT OF 5 – VERY GOOD

PROS: Non-Caucasian heroine; loved the small-town setting; realistically handles issues of race and fitting in; Tiffany's flaws make for interesting character growth; great secondary characters; good message

CONS: Took a while to become interested in Daniel's sub-plot; William's change of character seems sudden; Simon's conflict wasn't completely resolved

Tiffany Cheung hightailed it out of the small town of Everville, New York as soon as she had the opportunity. For years, she's been trying to make a name for herself in publishing, attempting to put her English degree to good use in Manhattan. But when she loses her job and can't pay the rent on her apartment, her only option is to move back in with her parents. Her family is embarrassed by the way Tiffany's career has worked out, but they're delighted that she's available to help out at the family diner.

Tiffany is not so pleased at this prospect, and when the opportunity arises to tutor her high school crush's son in English, she immediately accepts.

Tiffany hadn't realised that Chris Jamieson had returned to Everville, let alone that he'd dropped out of college when his girlfriend got pregnant. Now Chris is a divorced, single-parent attempting to make his dad's farm into a profitable business venture. Chris doesn't want to project his lost dreams on to his son, but he can't help but wish Simon would make of his life than he did. Tiffany tutored Chris in high school, and he hopes that she'll help Simon make his way through summer school unscathed.

What neither of them expects is for the spark Tiffany and Chris had in high school to be reappear, especially considering that Tiffany has no plans to stay in Everville permanently. Given that Chris is tied to his farm, is there any hope for their romance to last beyond this summer?

Back to the Good Fortune Diner immediately grabbed my attention when I was flipping through the publisher's catalogue, even though I've only dabbled in the Superromance line once before. It might not be obvious from my profile picture, but I'm Anglo-Indian, and I'm always pleased to come across a mixed-race heroine in the romance genre. The fact that Tiffany was Asian-American was enough to inspire me to read this book, and it helped that I'm a big fan of small-town stories and reunion romances.

Tiffany is actually the second Asian-American heroine I've encountered this year, since I read Camy Tang's *Sushi for One?* back in January. Both novels featured single women nearing the age of thirty and struggling with their families' projections for their futures. I have to say that I related to Tiffany more so than Lex, the protagonist of *Sushi for One?* Admittedly, I didn't think I'd have a lot in common with either woman, given that I got married at the age of twenty and that my Indian family has managed to avoid pigeon-holing me into the traditional career route of doctor/lawyer/minister. But as *Back to the Good Fortune Diner* progressed, I realised that I had more in common with Tiffany than I initially thought, and I'm sure I won't be the only reader who is pleasantly surprised by the message in this novel.

Several reviewers have commented on the fact that Tiffany isn't always the most likeable heroine, and I commend Vicki Essex for taking this risk. Even if I disagreed with some of Tiffany's actions, I didn't want to shake her for making such silly decisions because I could understand her reasoning. Tiffany is scared of taking risks, and constantly has her defences up, a throwback to the bullying she experienced as a child. Although the bullying I experienced at school wasn't linked to my ethnicity (given that my skin is more akin to that of a vampire than my Indian grandfather) I, too, would be shocked if someone who had looked down on me at school suddenly wanted to go on a coffee date. Sometimes it's hard to reconcile our past memories of a person or a place with the present-day reality, so I didn't blame Tiffany for the way she acted at certain points throughout the novel. I'm sure that anyone who has had trouble fitting in—whether for issues of race or not—will be able to relate to Tiffany's problems in Everville.

Despite their different racial backgrounds, Tiffany and Chris's families have a lot in common, mainly their constant projecting of ideas about their children's futures. This is something I'm so, so thankful that I never experienced, but I didn't stop me from sympathising with Tiffany and her brother, Daniel, or Chris and his son, Simon. I appreciated that Vicki showed that parents having visions of their children's futures isn't limited to any specific ethnic group, and your race doesn't determine how you deal with parental pressure. Tiffany and Daniel had very different responses, with Tiffany running away to Manhattan and Daniel attempting to align his life to his parents' vision. On the other hand, both Chris and Simon get defensive about their respective parents pushing them towards a certain future, which causes a lot of tension in their family.

I hadn't realised that the Superromance novels contained sub-plots, so Daniel's story was a pleasant surprise. It did take me a while to warm up to Daniel and his dilemma over introducing his non-Asian girlfriend to his family, and admitting to them that he might not want to run the family business when his father retired. Initially I didn't care much about Daniel and just wanted to get back to Tiffany's story, but he grew on me as the novel developed.

I realise that I've not actually discussed much about the romance yet, which might seem odd given that this is a romance novel. The theme of fitting-in and Tiffany and Chris's character growth is tied tightly to their romance, with all of the elements depending on each other in order for their relationship to survive. I suppose you could say that their romance is typical of small-town stories where one character returns and discovers that the sparks are still there despite not having seen each other in years. Personally, I like those sorts of romances, and I appreciated that what was keeping Chris and Tiffany from admitting that they wanted their relationship to last was actually their own fears and misconceptions about the future.

This was wrapped up in what I felt was the major theme of the novel—Do you really know what you want? Sometimes we think something is the best path for us in life because it makes the most money, or because it fulfils our parents' dreams for us, or because it validates our university or career choices. Or sometimes it's simply because it's the safest route. I know I've been guilty of this lately, and it's taken me a while to admit to friends and family that I want to devote the next few years of my life working on my writing, rather than getting further qualifications or taking a safe job. Tiffany and Chris's fears really spoke to me, and I have a feeling that they'll hit a chord with other readers as well.

There isn't a lot that I disliked about this novel, but if I had to pin-point anything, I had a couple of issues with the secondary characters. As I mentioned before, it took me a while to warm up to Daniel, but it was quite the opposite with Chris's father, William. Regardless of how completely un-politically correct he might be, he seemed pretty realistic at the start of the novel. However, he had a complete turn-around later in the book when someone confronted him about his treatment of Tiffany, and I didn't find it terribly believable, given how adamant he had been about his earlier beliefs. Perhaps if his change of character had been more drawn-out I would have bought it. I also wish that Simon's conflict had been resolved more. He seemed a little forgotten in the rush to conclude Tiffany and Chris's romance.

My small issues with the secondary characters are honestly all I can criticise about this novel, which has been a wonderful introduction to the Harlequin Superromance line. If you like romances that feature dynamic characters, believable conflicts and appealing settings, this is definitely a line to check out, and I highly recommend starting with *Back to the Good Fortune Diner*.

Disclaimer: This is a mass-market romance and contains three, brief sexual scenes, as well as a few instances of foul language.

Review title provided by Harlequin.

Laura says

All the characters in this book felt very real ... almost a little too real to have a crushy high school romance that didn't work out and then got a second chance. Great book with a heroine (and lots of secondary characters) of color, lots of angst, lots of romance, and a snarky teen (bless his heart). Enjoyable.

Lily (Night Owl Book Cafe) says

I got this book from Harlequin through Netgalley in exchange of an honest review.

Solid 3.5 Stars!

I have to admit, I cannot recall the last time or if I ever read an interracial romance, so naturally my curiosity had me picking this book up.

Tiffany Cheung grew up in a small town called Everville, New York. It was also a place she couldn't wait to get away from. After losing her job in Manhattan, she is forced to move back to her home town and her parents house. On top of it, she finds herself working at the family Chinese diner. Until she runs into Chris Jamieson again, her high school crush that she used to tutor. Now Chris has a son, and needs her help in tutoring the boy.

There was a lot of things about this book that I liked.

For one, I loved the family dynamics on both the Cheung's side and Jamieson's and how different and alike it felt. The author gave us a glimpse into a lot of relationships between Tiffany and her brother, and their parents as well as what was going on with Chris and his son and Chris' father. Which made the story bigger and painted the picture a whole lot better. Since this was a small town book, you could definitely get the feel of the small town. When Tiffany comes back, she ends up running into a lot of people from high school. Years have changed them, and they all split in different direction and Tiffany ends up having a hard time understanding why they want to grab a cup of coffee with her and catch up when they barely spoke in High School.

I liked Chris, he was a divorced, single father trying to do right by his son and his own father. He dropped out of college to come back and help his then wife raise their son Simon and take over the farm. When his father had an accident that cost him his leg, life on the farm got a little hard and it's up to him and Simon to keep it going. He has a hard time understanding why Simon is struggling in school, which forces him to hire Tiffany.

I liked that the author touched on some sensitive issues in the book. Like Chris' father, who would say stuff to Tiffany that was very hurtful, downright mean and a bit racist. Of course Tiffany ends up confronting him in the end, letting him know that his jokes aren't all that funny and do affect her and her parents.

The side plot about Tiffany's brother Daniel kept my attention as well. He works at his family diner and has a college education. He was never able to start his own life because the parents wanted him working and helping at the diner, until he met a doctor in New York. The doctor is not Chinese, which Tiffany was not afraid to point out. And although there was only one mention that his parents assumed she was Chinese, there was no mention to their reaction in the end about Selena nor Chris. We don't actually get to see what the parents really thought of their children with people from the other race. Even with that one little hint at the beginning of the book that they assume Chris' significant other is a nice Chinese girl.

Simon, I liked him. He was just another high school kid who was misunderstood and with the help from Tiffany finally began to open up and was able to share stuff with his father that he had not otherwise.

There was also a few things I wasn't sure about.

I wanted to relate to Tiffany, I really did, but I couldn't. She was a downright career woman, who had no

future for family or husband or settling down. She started a thing with Chris that on her part was only suppose to be a fling while she was looking for another job in the city. She never really talked to Chris on how their relationship should be, and could have given him a bigger warning. I did like that she stood up for herself, but she also ended up making promises to Simon when she lecturing herself on other parts of the book that she cannot make promises. So in the end, her actions made me a little mad since I am very family oriented myself.

I was actually a little surprised that Daniel was being forced to work at the diner even with a college education. I figured his parents would be happy that their son has a degree and could work a nice job. Instead, they wanted him to stay at the diner.

I did not feel the spark between Tiffany and Chris for a while. Although the romance was slow in this book, it felt a bit realistic, and there was just so many other things going on that made up for it that I truly enjoyed it.

I was hoping that Daniel would get his own book, but I was glad to see his happily ever after in this one and it didn't leave me hanging. Overall, this was an interesting sweet read that I thoroughly enjoyed.

Jenn says

the story was okay, but I really liked Tiffany as a main character. She was great, fully fleshed out and complicated.

N. says

Good novel

Review coming soon.

Will write, revise, review and have a formed opinion soon. Please wait for my review. Thank you Vicki Essex for this novel.
