



## Best Intentions

*Emily Listfield*

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## **Best Intentions** Emily Listfield

From the acclaimed author of Waiting to Surface comes the story of four college friends whose reunion reawakens old desires and grudges--with fatal results.

### **Best Intentions Details**

Date : Published May 5th 2009 by Atria (first published April 17th 2009)

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Author : Emily Listfield

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## From Reader Review Best Intentions for online ebook

### **Michele says**

After being blown away by Waiting to Surface I was anxious to read more of Emily Listfield's work and Best Intentions didn't disappoint. The characters were likable and believable. Nothing could be more realistic than Lisa's ongoing trauma as her company is bought out, that's for sure.

The twists and turns were effectively woven into the ongoing everyday life we all have to deal with, even in extraordinary times. It is a thoroughly satisfying read; the only problem is the urge to skim in the race to find out what happens next.

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### **sylvie says**

I absolutely loved this novel, I was unable to put it down and will buy Emily Listfield's other novels. I thoroughly enjoyed the authors intelligent and wonderful prose. Emily Listfield allows us a profound look into the lives of each character, especially Lisa Barkley, through whom we learn the strength and weaknesses of each characters which inhabits "BEST INTENTIONS". I do not know if I would call this crime or murder mystery which it certainly is, a crime is committed. I read this novel as a wonderful search into the human psyche. It has been a while since a book had me so hooked I wanted to order an authors other novels...now! For more information about Emily Listfield go to: <http://emilylistfield.com/>

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### **Sarah says**

After its initial slow start, *Best Intentions: A Novel* by Emily Listfield grew to be quite enticing, probably due to its engaging and very natural writing style.

I have to admit, I really wanted Sam to have been cheating on Lisa--also I have come to decide that Lisa doesn't really work as a character's name, not sure why. I guess the way it's written leads to a more wholesome ending.

Also, I think it would've been fun to watch Lisa and David team up against Favata and actually bring him down rather than having Sam do it as a way to save his career. This leads me to the fact that there was an undercurrent throughout the novel that women, particularly Lisa, sit back and allow the men to be their saviors. While I would be the first to admit that there are always times when it's nice to hear, "I'll take care of it" (as Lisa hopes Sam will tell her), it was a bit off-putting to read over and over again that Lisa and Deirdre won't take stands with the men in their lives. Lisa in particular should have taken a stand (by not having sex with Sam?!?) till she knew for certain (not because of Sam's wishy-washy explanations) that he had not cheated on her (nor killed Deirdre!).

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### **Shanda says**

I'm still trying to decide exactly how I feel about this book. I gave it three stars because I was interested the whole time and looked forward to reading it. I did really like the twist in the middle of the book right when you think that the whole thing is just going to be reflections on marriage, lying and cheating. But then the ending was a little of a letdown, it was a bit predictable and I just wanted something a little more explosive.

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★, • \* ° \* ?\*Blanka\*?\*°°\*•, ♥★ says

On the surface, Lisa Barkley seems to have it all -- a husband who was her college sweetheart, two lovely daughters, a high-powered PR job, a residence in Manhattan, and a best friend she's had since college. But Lisa's life isn't as perfect as it may seem on the outside.

\* She is beginning to suspect her husband Sam might be having an affair -- and the distance that has been growing between them seems insurmountable. In addition, she is startled to find herself feeling attracted to another man.

\* Her daughters are pulling away from her -- seemingly embarrassed to be seen with her.

\* Her job hangs in the balance when her company is sold to another PR firm -- and the new vice president seems hell bent on making Lisa's life miserable.

\* The financial pressures of living in Manhattan and sending her daughters to an expensive private school are taking a toll on the Barkley finances -- but neither Sam or Lisa can talk together about the financial pressures they face.

\* Her best friend Deirdre is in a volatile relationship with Ben -- a dashing photographer who won't commit to her and sometimes leaves her with bruises.

When Jack -- an old college friend of Lisa, Sam and Deirdre -- comes to town for a reunion dinner, it seems like things in Lisa's life start to unravel all at the same time -- Sam's distance, job pressures, financial pressures, pressures to fit in at her daughters' school, and Deirdre's toying with both Jack and Ben. Just when it seems like things can't get any worse, it does -- Deirdre is found murdered in her apartment and no one (including Lisa) has an alibi. Driven to find out what happened to her best friend and put her life back together, Lisa must face the truth about herself, her husband, her friends and best friend -- no matter how painful it might be.

Finished it, however a very predictable read!

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**Violet Yates says**

I loved this book. It has just the right mixture of suspense and thrills to carry one through to the end. Emily Listfield is a gifted writer; one can tell just by reading the book that she put her all into writing this book. The story is about thirty nine year old Lisa Barkley, whose marriage is at a stand-still. She thinks her husband, Sam, is having an affair. She is a PR representative at a firm that was just sold to a cutthroat firm from Boston. Her best friend is acting distant. Surrounded by the upper crust of New York's finest, genteel

society, she feels her lack of money is a failing she wishes she could change.

Lisa confronts her husband on his guarded actions and is mollified by his explanations. He is a writer working on a difficult story. When his explanations no longer suffice, she turns to a new found friend, David, for comfort. A man with resources, he gives her information she didn't really want to know, and things begin to spiral. Suddenly, her best friend, Deirdre, is dead of suspicious circumstances. A few people are suspect, including her own husband.

This book was a great read. I do recommend it to anyone who likes a thriller with a twist at the end. The characters are rich in flavor, as are the descriptions of the upper echelons of New York City and their quirks. I feel I know now what it must be like to live in a society such as this, to always feel as if one is not up to par. Thank you, Emily Listfield, for enriching my life for a short time.

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## **Shonda says**

Is it possible that the world you carefully constructed can shatter in an instant based on an assumption you made after hearing a voice message on your husband's cell phone? This is what Lisa Barkley begins to think after hearing the muffled message from an unknown woman to her husband.

On the outside, Sam and Lisa are happily married with two daughters, Claire and Phoebe. Lisa holds a top position at a PR firm, while Sam is a journalist. They met and fell in love during college and married shortly after graduation. Their daughters attend private school on the Upper East Side.

Lisa never thought to question her marriage until she hears this voice message. She shares her concerns with her best friend, Deirdre. Deirdre does not share Lisa's suspicions and tells her it's probably nothing. Lisa tries to shrug it off, however she just cannot seem to let it go.

Meanwhile an old college friend comes to Manhattan to interview for a job and to celebrate his 40th birthday. Jack is Deirdre's former boyfriend and the four of them get together for a night of celebration and to reminisce. Jack and Deirdre entertain the idea of resuming their past love, only this time both have significant others. Jack is now married to Alice and Deirdre is in a relationship with Ben.

The four friends' reunion sets the stage for past secrets, betrayal and lies to be revealed. Can we truly leave our past in the past? If we try to correct past mistakes, are really doing more harm than good?

Best Intentions is a book that you can easily get lost in. I was captivated within the first chapter and began to wonder if Sam was truly having an affair. Without giving too much away, the novel's twists and turns and I began to question each character's motive. At one point I truly felt for Lisa because I didn't know who was telling the truth and who was not. I have to admit, after finishing the book and finally knowing Sam's side of the story, I still had my doubts.

This is the first book I read by this author and it will not be the last. Best Intentions is one I highly recommend.

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4.5 Stars

## **Angie Pemberton says**

Wanted to find out what the mystery was...took a while for this to get good.

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## **Laura says**

This was a venture into the world of adult contemporary fiction, which is a genre I am very wary of these days. The book jacket features the following quote: “An intriguing story full of warmth, humor and insight.” (Joy Fielding, New York Times best selling author). Undoubtedly the ‘warmth, humor and insight’ description is one of the reasons I decided to read it. Lisa Barkley, the story’s narrator, is a 40-something Madison Avenue professional, married to Sam for 15 years, the union producing two daughters, Claire and Phoebe. Sam and Lisa have been able to provide their two young daughters with an upper class education in an exclusive private school. Lisa and Sam are not on the same income level as the parents of most of their daughters school mates. This situation makes Lisa somewhat resentful towards the women who have no worries about their finances.. Lisa does have worries and they are compounded when she discovers that the comfortable position she has occupied for several years and has enabled Lisa and Sam to maintain their upper class lifestyle is threatened by the hostile takeover of the company where Lisa works. In addition, she discovers a message left by a mysterious woman on Sam's cell phone that makes Lisa ever increasingly suspicious of her husbands behavior. Midway through the story Lisa and Sam go to dinner with two of their close friends from college, Deidre and Jack. At this juncture the story turns from chick lit to a murder mystery when the day after the dinner, Deidre, Lisa's best friend, is found dead in her apartment. You, as the reader, view everything that happens through Lisa's eyes. She finds herself unable to trust anyone, herself and Sam included. Listfield keeps you guessing, along with Lisa, as various revelations about the people most precious to her, begin to rock her world. This is at times, a taut thriller.

I wish the author had refrained from having her characters use the infamous “f” word as frequently as they did. It took away from my enjoyment of the story. Otherwise the book lived up to its billing, it was, indeed a “story full of warmth, humor and insight”.

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## **Jaime says**

This is the story of a working mom of two who is suddenly feeling very insecure in her life. Her husband appears distant and is lying to her, her employer has been purchased by another, larger firm, and she doesn't even fit in with the other moms at her daughters' school. Her paranoia is taking over her life, fed by an old friend coming back to town and a new client who begins flirting with her. Unfortunately, some of her actions seem to have devastating consequences.

I thought this was a pretty good story, but a little disjointed. It's definitely divided into two different parts, with different pacing. I felt like things were wrapped up a little too quickly at the end — I would have liked to have seen more exploration of David Forrester and his motives, since he plays such a vital role in the turning point. So I'd say this was a decent read, but it could have been a little bit better.

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## **Rebecca Johnson says**

I'm not a big reader of mysteries, who when Atria books asked if I would be interested in reviewing a copy of Emily Listfield's new book, *Best Intentions*, I was a little unsure. I needn't have worried, however, as it was nothing like I expected; a beautiful read that was over far too quick for my liking!

Lisa lives in the upper suburbs of Manhattan. She's the Vice President of a small but well respected PR company, her husband is a well-known journalist, her daughter's attend a very prestigious school and her long time best friend owns a chic up-and-coming boutique. She would seem to have it made.

But Lisa is never quite comfortable in this flashy world, she never feels like she truly fits. It's not the life she imagined for herself when she, husband Sam, girlfriend Deirdre and friend Jack were in college. So when this world that she works so hard to stay afloat in starts to crumble around her, Lisa is left with nothing to cling to. Everything she holds to be true is fading away a little more each day. Her career, and worse, her marriage is in shambles, her best friend is dead and she has to face the very real possibility that someone she knows and loves may be responsible.

Emily Listfield's murder mystery is not your typical whodunit (and nope, I was way off course with who I thought did it), and I loved it all the more because of this. More than anything is this was the story of Lisa, and her struggle to find some balance in her constantly shifting worlds of work, love, and life.

The true pleasures of the book surface in all the in-betweens, in all the tiny details of the minor passages. Listfield paints scenes of home life with a brush of true beauty. A father eating breakfast with his daughters, a child's messy room, an awkward teenager's interactions with her mother – both bitter rival and most trusted confidante at the same time – these were the moments that made the book truly memorable.

I would recommend this book wholeheartedly to anyone who enjoys character driven mysteries or family dramas. **4.5/5**

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## **Heidi Thieman says**

There were some great twists that I did NOT see coming. Great story, filled with surprises - I really enjoyed it.

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## **Jennifer says**

### **Story Overview**

On the surface, Lisa Barkley seems to have it all -- a husband who was her college sweetheart, two lovely daughters, a high-powered PR job, a residence in Manhattan, and a best friend she's had since college. But Lisa's life isn't as perfect as it may seem on the outside.

\* She is beginning to suspect her husband Sam might be having an affair -- and the distance that has been growing between them seems insurmountable. In addition, she is startled to find herself feeling attracted to another man.

\* Her daughters are pulling away from her -- seemingly embarrassed to be seen with her.

\* Her job hangs in the balance when her company is sold to another PR firm -- and the new vice president seems hell bent on making Lisa's life miserable.

\* The financial pressures of living in Manhattan and sending her daughters to an expensive private school are taking a toll on the Barkley finances -- but neither Sam or Lisa can talk together about the financial pressures they face.

\* Her best friend Deirdre is in a volatile relationship with Ben -- a dashing photographer who won't commit to her and sometimes leaves her with bruises.

When Jack -- an old college friend of Lisa, Sam and Deirdre -- comes to town for a reunion dinner, it seems like things in Lisa's life start to unravel all at the same time -- Sam's distance, job pressures, financial pressures, pressures to fit in at her daughters' school, and Deirdre's toying with both Jack and Ben. Just when it seems like things can't get any worse, it does -- Deirdre is found murdered in her apartment and no one (including Lisa) has an alibi. Driven to find out what happened to her best friend and put her life back together, Lisa must face the truth about herself, her husband, her friends and best friend -- no matter how painful it might be.

### My Thoughts

When I was contacted about reading and reviewing this book, I was expecting a run-of-the-mill murder mystery. Now there is nothing wrong with murder mysteries. I certainly enjoy them from time to time. But I often find them to be a bit formulaic. But this one sounded a bit different from the norm, and the setting of Manhattan was intriguing so I said "Yes...please send me a copy."

I was thrilled to find out that this book WAS NOT your standard murder mystery. Lisa's character and the stresses of her life are very well-developed. In fact, the murder doesn't happen until about two-thirds of the way through the book -- giving you plenty of time to get to know all the characters and the stresses of Lisa's life. For me, this made for a better-than-average mystery. I always like when an author takes the time to develop the characters rather than just focusing on the "who done it" or procedural aspects. In fact, I think the author could have skipped the whole murder part of it and still had a wonderful book about marriage, friendship, and the pressures of being a working mom. I really don't think the book would have suffered at all had Deirdre lived.

I also like the little details the author works into the book that give it a ring of authenticity. For example, here is a passage from when Lisa's husband is looking for some mittens for one of their daughters:

It occurs to me that he is not really asking for their likeliest location but prompting me to find them for him. I consider telling him to look for them himself but I don't. The first attempt at ferreting out last winter's accessories from the jumble of mismatched gloves, hats and scarves is an iffy proposition at best, especially for one with little experience in this type of archaeological dig.

I don't know about you, but I very much related to this passage -- finding gloves for the first time in a winter is a task best left up to Mom!

The other aspect of the book I liked was the setting of Manhattan. My family likes to visit New York City, and it was kind of fun to read about the Barkley's life in the city and recognize some of the places where we had been on visits. Also, the sections where Lisa feels outclassed and intimidated by the mothers at her

daughters' elite private school were fascinating to me. It felt like getting a glimpse at secret society from an outsider's perspective -- kind of like falling into The Nanny Diaries but from a working mom's point-of-view.

#### My Final Recommendation

This was a good read, and I would recommend it. If you are looking for a "by the books" procedural-type murder mystery, this might not be a good fit for you. To me, this was really more of a character-driven novel that just happens to have a murder in it.

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#### Rhonda says

I didn't expect this book to be a good as it was.

Lisa is married with two children, and a best friend. Sounds typical, but it's anything but typical. Full of surprises, things you think are going to happen may or may not, things that do happen, you didn't expect to. Do you really know the people you have known forever??

Two quotes from the very end of the book:

"Even as I say it, I know that can't happen. The past is never really over. Our interpretation of it may shift like a kaleidoscope, it may inform us or lead us astray, it may bring comfort or delusion, an excuse to hate or a reason to love. Some of us race too quickly to try to escape it, some of us cling so tightly it blinds us to the present. But one way or another, it is always with us."

"They, like others before them, discovered that past behavior is not predictive of future actions with anything more than ten percent accuracy. The other ninety percent remains idiosyncratic, unknowable, forever subject to last-minute, inexplicable changes of heart. There are no algorithms that forecast with any certainty what any one of us will want in the end, though people will surely continue to try."

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#### momruncraft says

A marriage lacking trust. A chain of devastating events. A woman found dead. Nothing is what it seems. I devoured this book in one sitting. I HAD to know what happened. The whys kept me up far after I had finished the book. You learn that the history between a husband and wife means more than can ever really be expressed in words. Comfort in relationships can become boring, taken for granted, and forgotten...until it's gone. Or questioned. Or jeopardized. Suspenseful read.

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