



## **The Unified Theory of Love and Everything**

*Travis Neighbor Ward*

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## **The Unified Theory of Love and Everything** Travis Neighbor Ward

Emerson Wheeler has everything she ever wanted: two beautiful daughters, a reliable husband, and a modest gardening business in a small town. But after her estranged father commits suicide, she has to face facts. She's been lying to people her whole life, and her unhappy marriage is keeping her from knowing her true self.

Finn Lowell is a married father of two and a Navy police officer. After a childhood of abuse he has a hard time trusting people. Soon he must decide whether to continue in active duty and risk being deployed overseas. If he quits, he can spend the summer at his lake house alone with his sons.

When Emerson volunteers to help Sybil Hay, a reclusive physicist, with her rundown estate in Delphi, Georgia, she's in for a surprise: Finn works there in his free time. Emerson has only met him once through her husband, but it convinced her that spending time together could be dangerous because of their attraction. Equally dangerous are Sybil's unconventional beliefs about love, which date back to a mysterious summer she spent with Albert Einstein.

After Sybil falls ill, Finn makes Emerson an outrageous offer that will test everything they stand for. And through it they will discover their deepest fears and dreams, while uncovering secrets they never knew.

In **THE UNIFIED THEORY OF LOVE AND EVERYTHING**, Travis Neighbor Ward takes readers on a journey into the heart of marriage, friendship, and what it means to love someone.

## **The Unified Theory of Love and Everything Details**

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Author : Travis Neighbor Ward

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## From Reader Review The Unified Theory of Love and Everything for online ebook

### Jennifer says

Let me start by saying, this probably isn't a great choice of novels for someone sensitive to the topic of adultery. I'm not talking running off to a hotel to sneak around but the bond and feelings that can develop between two people who are married to others. However, adultery is not the point of this novel. Emerson and Finn are both amazing characters that are at turning points in their lives. Finn is trying to decide whether to retire or re-enlist in the Navy. Emerson is trying to follow her dreams by building a gardening and landscaping business, and honestly – trying to establish her self-worth beyond being a mother and a wife. True, honest conversation between Emerson and Finn comes regularly and easily, unlike the way it is with their spouses. They also form a strong bond spending time with and eventually, taking care of Sybil as her health fails. Their relationship poses the question, does there have to be intimacy or sexual contact in order to call a relationship an "affair?" Also, do years of marriage have to result in growing apart?

I found this novel extremely moving and thought-provoking, however, there are moments so real and honest you can feel it in your bones as you are reading. Moments when Emerson tries to initiate intimacy with her husband, are excruciating and leave you feeling as humiliated and rejected as she was. There were also several moments when they were talking or arguing where I wanted to just smack Holt in the head and say, "support and love this woman or just go away!" Finn's situation with his wife, Jennifer, was equally frustrating but in a different way. Finn and Jennifer just seemed to have very little in common other than being husband and wife and parents to their two sons. It was very clear that they didn't share any inner hopes or dreams with one another, and that they honestly did not know the other person at all.

I was mesmerized by Travis Neighbor Ward's writing from beginning to end, found this to be a beautiful story. The ending may not be agreeable or appealing to everyone, but I found it to be perfect. There were no elaborate, dramatic details, things just seemed to fall into place. Emerson, Finn, and Sybil are some of the most uniquely developed characters that I have read, and will not soon forget about them. "The Unified Theory of Love and Everything" has undoubtedly had more impact on me than anything I have read due to its honesty and emotion. I highly recommend this novel to any readers that enjoy Literary or Women's fiction.

\*Thanks to NetGalley for providing a copy of this novel in exchange for an honest review.

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### Lauren says

When I read the description for this book through NetGalley I thought, "Sure, why not? I'll see if the publisher will let me read it or not." Thanks to NetGalley I was granted early access to this book and it was a decent read.

In the beginning for the first couple of chapters I sort of wanted to punch Emerson, the main female character, in the throat. She seemed whiny and annoying and I kept thinking to myself that this book was going to drag on. To my surprise it quickly became much more interesting and I found that I felt terrible for Emerson and thought that her husband was a douchebag and her love interest was a needy and arrogant baby.

I get it. Life and relationships are hard sometimes, so I totally understand why she hung around and battled her feelings and her marriage conflicting with each other, but for me I kept screaming in my head, "Woman, please. Just kick both of their butts to the curb, grab your girls and Sybil, and get away from Delphi."

The book ended on a typical note and that's why I gave it four stars instead of five because I would have rather the ending be a bit different, but all in all it was a good read. I think most women (and a good amount men who are interested in books like these) will really enjoy it. Read it!

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### **Cindy H. says**

Thank you to NetGalley for providing me with an ARC in exchange for my honest review.

I believe in all fairness, my disappointment with the novel was one of expectations. The publishers blurb had me anticipating a novel of literary fiction but Unified Theory of Love and Everything was much more of a romance novel, which is really not my reading preference. The story revolves around a frustrated housewife who contemplates an affair with a man she volunteers with. I found the sexual tension to be lukewarm, the plot slow moving and certain story elements implausible. The Einstein angle was intriguing but mostly bogged down the story due to all the scientific theories. I'm sure this book will appeal to others, unfortunately for me it was just mediocre.

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### **Shel says**

Thank you to NetGalley and Northside Books for an ARC of his book.

It's not very often you see the terms "romance novel" and "Albert Einstein" paired together, which is one of the reasons I was drawn to this book but that's about all I found interesting about this book. The story surrounds a pair of star-crossed lovers who spend their time taking care of an aging physicist (and her garden) who is somehow connected to Einstein and the female lead characters husband. Did you get that because the entire book is so wordy and the relationships so interconnected that at times I couldn't follow the story. Really, I read half a chapter and didn't understand why it was even in the book because it didn't seem to fit with the rest of the plot. In the end I was only reading the book to get to the end and even then the plot wrapped up so unbelievably nicely it made me wonder if i was reading the same book.

Bottom line: the book failed to deliver the expectations I had when I read the summary. I thought this was going to be an unconventional romance novel not an overly wordy Harlequin romance.

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### **Laurie says**

-Love That Knows No Bounds-

I've rarely read a book that tackles the complications of love and relationships in a real way, but if any work of fiction captures these aspects, it's The Unified Theory of Love and Everything. This story is of two people who fall in love under circumstances that forbid them to be together for proprieties sake. Really, the only thing that keeps them apart is the unusual circumstance of being in love with more than one person at a time. There is a thin line between love for the sake of propriety and love in its rawest form. The Unified Theory takes a military cop and a woman fallen out of desire for husband; the result is a tremendous conflict of

interest and earth-shattering consequences in the mind and heart. Sybil, an older lady whom the couple cares for, is an influence on their lives for both better and worse. I'm guessing readers will either love this book or strongly dislike its story. One major thing I kept in mind was how artfully such a controversial topic was presented in a fictional novel. And that is just what this book is-fiction. For those prepared to receive a profound message of heartbreak, love, and renewal, this book is for you. - Laurie Kozlowski / [www.bookescapereviews.wordpress.com](http://www.bookescapereviews.wordpress.com)

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### **miss.mesmerized mesmerized says**

Emerson Wheeler could be happy. At 32, she has a loving husband, two great girls and a small gardening business which is just starting. But after the suicide of her father, she starts questioning the decisions she has made in life and when she takes over a new job at Hay Manor, this aggravates. Sybil, the elderly owner of the mansion, introduces her to Finn, an army member who has some very different notions of life. They get along better and better and at a certain point, Emerson has to question her marriage. When Finn offers that both of them and their kids spend the summer at his lake cottage, she agrees knowing that this will be a serious test for her life so far.

Travis Neighbor Ward's novel addresses many topics all adults have to face sooner or later in life. Emerson seems to have a perfect life, but you can be unhappy and disappointed even by what seems to be picture-perfect from the outside. If your life does not fulfil you, if you had plans that had to be given up for whichever reason, you will be dissatisfied or even frustrated at some point in life. No matter how ideally you might match with your partner, you go on in life and develop further, and you might be forced to reassess if you still want the same things in life and if you still have the carefully constructed balance in your marriage. For Emerson and her husband, this is not true anymore after some years, but instead of talking about it, they find other problems which cover the real troubles. Apart from these, we have grown-up suffering from experiences of their childhood which make them unable to utter their feelings and even permitting feelings at all.

There are a lot of aspects in this novel which are worth thinking about since they are taken from life and it surely offers a lot of ideas to talk about in book clubs. Yet, I missed some surprise in the book. Most of the developments are very stereotypical and foreseeable. The protagonist also seems to be a very clever woman, but her decisions are purely emotion based, I did not have the impression that she was pondering over her situation, but acted impulsively which I found not always very convincing. Nevertheless, I liked the style of writing and especially the hints to Albert Einstein which were cleverly integrated.

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### **Paula says**

Thank you for this ARC. I kept with the book, because I feel if I have been given an opportunity to have an advance copy, I will finish it and give an honest feedback.

I think this book has a good story, and a TON of potential. However, I felt the characters were not fully developed. Emerson feels she is caught up as having such a part of her children's life, almost that her motherhood is what defines her, yet the reader sees no indication of this. There are very few interactions with the girls that show us how she interacts with them. If this is supposed to be such a part of her life, it should

be a part of the story. Also, Emerson often says what a good person she is, and how her friend Sarah thinks so highly of her, but again, we don't get an indication of that in the book. She cares for Sybil, but the relationship there doesn't even seem well developed. There is no indication of what she does that is so good. That should be developed better.

The whole concept of her having no contact with her father for TEN years, and then deciding to go see him and finding him dead, just seemed too odd. I couldn't get that ten year gap out of my mind. I mean she had no relationship with him at all, even when her kids were born but yet is so bothered by his death. Maybe she was feeling guilt over those then years, but that didn't come acrossed at all. I found Emerson to be a very unlikable character. She seemed selfish and self absorbed yet thought she was a wonderful person who was kind and thoughtful, a good parent, a loving child, and stuck in a marriage with an uncaring husband. I didn't like her at all.

I feel the story has a lots of potential, but Emerson needs to be portrayed more as a likable character or people won't identify with the book.

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### **Ann says**

I was really split about 3 stars or 4. I couldn't decide if I liked Emerson and Finn's involvement or not. I loved Sybil Hay and her old house. She was a free thinker and claimed to be Albert Einstein's mistress. Emerson seems a bit one sided in the story, there is not a lot interaction between her and her daughters , her friend Sarah or her family. Finn seems more developed as well as Sybil. This is book one of a new series (Delphi) referring to the town in Georgia where this book takes place. I hope in future books we will see that Emerson grows and finds peace in her life. A good story line that is probably more realistic than I realize.

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### **Sarah A says**

I received this book from Netgalley & Northside Books in exchange for a fair and honest review.

This book was not my usual read. I was drawn in by the words "literary romance", but in the end, I felt like it was more of a romance than a literary fiction read. While that's not necessarily a bad thing, it just wasn't what I was expecting. There were passages of literary fiction writing, but they faded in and out with a different, fluffier (to me) writing style.

For me, this was a solid romance read. The story kept me interested and I enjoyed the main characters and their conversations and dilemmas. Cons for me included unlikable secondary characters (Holt, Finn's wife Jennifer, and Emerson's best friend Sarah--who was totally unsympathetic to Emerson for reasons I couldn't quite grasp), and that it didn't quite live up to the literary part of "literary romance" for me, and so fell a little short of my expectations (which is likely just personal to me at this point in my life). I do recommend it if you like romantic reads, and are looking for something a bit fresh and different. There is also a sequel coming that further explores Sybil & Einstein's relationship, which I might pick up and give a go. . I still enjoyed this book, however, and I will tell you why.

Full review appears @ <http://reviewsreadathons.wordpress.com>.

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### **Jenn Belden says**

Whoa, this was a painful, complicated look at the choices we make, and how we live with them afterwards. Two very damaged people do a delicate and soul-searching dance around each other. Riveting and yet difficult to read at times - I needed to stop and give my heart some space.

If you struggle with the topic of adultery, this might not be for you. Finn and Emerson ARE damaged people, married to the wrong people for them, and their unhappiness at times became a bit overwrought, in a "why are they still in these relationships at all" kind of way.

Beautiful writing, and though not a light-hearted tome, this will make for impassioned book-club discussion!

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### **Karen says**

#### THE UNIFIED THEORY OF LOVE AND EVERYTHING BY TRAVIS NEIGHBOR WARD

"Some time will have to elapse before I am again calmly in possession of myself. Such an affair is a bit similar to murder!" ----Albert Einstein

It is March and Emerson has a business called Emergence which her husband Holt thinks as a hobby. Holt is a leading astronomer. They have two beautiful little girls. The family moved to Delphi, Georgia for Holt's job. Emerson has to argue with her husband to be home by six pm. because she has an appointment with Sybil Hay. Emerson wants to restore Sybil Hay's garden. Their daughters are Prue who is nine and Chloe who is six. Emerson is thirty-two years old and living with a man who is always working or working out. He is always too tired to have sex and Emerson wants to have sex and feels unsatisfied with her marriage.

I thought the author did an extremely good job in her character development. I could relate to Emerson for feeling that her marriage had big problems. Holt expects Emerson to handle everthing as far as doing all of the housework and cooking and bringing the children up. Emerson loves her husband but at the same time she feels Holt is emotionally unreachable. Sybil gives Emerson the job of restoring Hay Mannor's garden. The two women make an agreement that Emerson does the job without payment for her labor if Sybil pays for the materials. The deal is Emerson will be building her portfolio and Sybil will allow her to submit the restored gardens to magazines for publication. Also Emerson wants Sybil to give her a reference.

Sybil tells Emerson that Finn Lowell does things around her house in exchange for playing her piano and that Finn can help Emerson with restoring the property. Finn is the only man that she has ever been attracted to since she married Holt. As Finn and Emerson work together Emerson flirts with him and she wonders if they might become friends. Emerson also knows that married men and women can't be friends. Finn tells Emerson about his life as a cop and that he is thirty-five and he hasn't decided if he is going to retire in the summer. Finn tells Emerson that Sybil spent the summer of 1951 with Albert Einstein he was seventy-two and Sybil was twenty-two. Finn tells Emerson that he thinks Sybil is still living there in her mind. The more Finn and Emerson work together the more attracted they both become. Finn's wife Jennifer is described by Holt as having issues.

I really enjoyed this novel. The author dispenses much about Einstein that is factual except for a letter to Einstein from Sybil. It is about marriage, love, being honest with yourself, adultery.

I think this was well written but life experience and being married for twenty six years I knew what was going to transpire between Finn and Emerson. It was a matter of when as I read. I wasn't the least bit surprised by how this story was going to play out. I did not think the ending was rushed. I know that Emerson was not happily married and I understand why she made the choices she did. I do not feel judgmental of any of the characters choices.

Thank you to Net Galley, Travis Taylor Ward and Northside Books for my digital copy for a fair and honest review.

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### **Lolly K Dandeneau says**

“The word rang out in my mind like the distant bell of a church I attended, but wasn’t sure I believed in anymore: Wife! Wife! Wife!”

The most damaging lies of all are the ones we tell ourselves. I’m okay, this is good enough, bury those nagging emotions and self-reflective questions. Sometimes we find ourselves just surviving, ignoring the cracks in our homes, our loved ones, ourselves. Emerson Wheeler seems to be blessed, she has beautiful daughters, a good husband and a small business. So what if her husband sees it more as a hobby? Passionate about her gardening or not, he is the one making money, her business isn’t as fruitful. As for her father’s recent suicide, she should just get over it already, right? As many women feel, “The important thing was to be a great mother no matter how unhappy I was. It was my mantra.”

Sybil Hay is a physicist living in a crumbling estate Hay Manor, that just happens to have a greenhouse Emerson would kill to restore. She may not make money, but it could still lead to experience and help her make a name for herself. Hay herself is thought of as a crack pot, was she really Albert Einstein’s lover once? Surely she is stuck in imaginary daydreams that never could have happened. The woman just may be a catalyst for Emerson’s affairs of the heart. Finn Lowell too has a wife and family, a naval officer with a big decision to make about returning to active duty and deployments. Both he and Emerson feel a forbidden chemistry between them, and when Finn makes an offer she is sure she should refuse what she chooses may alter the course of their lives, and that of their families.

Sybil serves as an excuse for Finn and Emerson to come together, just as much as she pushes them to explore the truths about their families and themselves. Both seem to lean toward each other while also pulling back, a tug of war of longings. It is a story about the choices we make, the risks we sometimes take, and the people we hurt with our honesty. It can go either direction, self-denial or grabbing what is on offer while readying yourself for the fall-out. Is it braver to deny what the heart wants for the sake of safety, do we risk losing everything for a passion that could just be a passing desire... either way everything has strings attached. Who can judge another’s choices? Marriage can be a safe haven or it can destroy you.

Both Sybil and Finn are lugging around their past like rotting garbage. “My parents were smart and they were talkers, and they unpeeled each other in layers every night while I learned things no child should ever know.” Our first models of marriage, or partnerships is our parents. Everything that happens touches us, whether we are aware or not. Marriage is a great teacher, no one is unscathed in love, love strips us bare and

shows us both beautiful and ugly things about ourselves. Adultery is a different beast. You want to see people get fired up, discuss it! Everyone has an opinion and a judgement, some will throw a book across a room in disgust if characters are cheating. As we get older, things change and our once hot reactions have slowed down, because we know every marriage is it's own creature. What do we know of another's heart when half the time we are still figuring out our own? Marriage is a brutal teacher, it's blood, sweat and tears as much as joy and peace. But when you have to deny your nature, ignore small cruelties on a daily basis, have no one to turn to for support in desperate times- is that a solid marriage? Love yourself always but what is the point in a partnership if you're still adrift on your own with the big stuff? Don't we marry to have that person to fall into, that solid rock of acceptance? Otherwise, why not just be single forever? Isn't the point communion with another?

Whoa boy, this will be an interesting book club novel. The truth is, every option in life is a loaded one. Everyone comes with strings attached, their history, their funks, their issues and none of us escape the work it takes when you are in love. Every marriage has it's secrets, it's woes, it's rusty cogs. Sometimes you have to find yourself before you can figure out your next move. On the road to self-discovery Emerson uncovers lies and things she should have noticed all along. She also learns she too is imperfect, and Finn isn't necessarily going to be a knight in shining armor, but just a human with a defunct heart that is as lost as she.

An exploration of love, family, infidelity and a bit of Einstein.

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as an aside, what a pretty cover. <https://bookstalkerblog.wordpress.com/>

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### **Sharon says**

Northside Books and NetGalley provided me with an electronic copy of *The Unified Theory of Love and Everything*. I was under no obligation to review this book and my opinion is freely given.

Emerson Wheeler thought she had everything she wanted: two children, a husband who is a good provider, and a fledgling gardening business. After her father commits suicide, Emerson starts to honestly examine her personal life and comes to certain realizations.

Finn Lowell is trapped in an unhappy marriage, but has a pending retirement from the military that will allow him to spend more time with his two boys if he chooses not to reenlist.

When Emerson is given the opportunity to work on the gardens for Sybil Hay, a physicist with ties to Albert Einstein, she is surprised to find Finn volunteering for the ill woman. Having met in the past through her husband, the instant attraction that Emerson felt for the man back then is still floating under the surface. Through Sybil's careful prodding, will Emerson and Finn embark on a journey that may lead to the destruction of both of their families?

It was hard to find a connection with either of the main characters because I did not find them to be very

likable. Both Emerson and Finn find themselves trapped in unhappy circumstances, but many people are faced with similar situations and do not make the same choices. I did like the character of Sybil and thought it was interesting how the author weaved in historical references to Albert Einstein and his personal life. Overall, I was not blown away by either the story or the characters, so I would be hesitant to recommend it to other readers.

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### **Kayla Hemmerle says**

Let me start by saying this story will not be for everyone. However, of all the books I have read, this one connected with me on several levels. If I am being honest, I thought this was one of the most beautiful pieces of literature that I have ever read.

From the synopsis, you can infer, accurately, that Finn and Emerson have an attraction to each other. Both of them are married, but not happily. Not entirely unhappy but they both recognize that things are not right in their marriage. In both of them working with Sybil at Hay Manor, they both start to open their minds more to what life is really about.

I know this story is really about Emerson and Finn, but in my opinion, I feel Sybil is truly the star of the story. Sybil was in love with Albert Einstein for four years and this book is sprinkled with quotes and thoughts on Albert Einstein's theories and his life. We also see Sybil's unconventional feelings on love and happiness. Sybil almost seems mystical in how well she can read Emerson and Finn, but I think in reality, it was her own life experience with love that helped her see through Finn and Emerson. Some might say she "poked the bear", but I think Sybil's character had the fortitude to know how fragile life truly is, and that we shouldn't waste it.

The end of the book was not at all what I expected. I did read other reviews from readers on GoodReads, and some felt the end was rushed. I truly did not believe that to be the case. I think the author did a beautiful job at creating the realities of infidelity and when a family might be fracturing. It isn't pretty or nice, but people experience it every day. Finn and Emerson have to deal with these issues or they cannot ever move on with their lives. They needed closure.

I would absolutely recommend this book. However, it is not a typical love story. Its classified as Fiction Literature>Romance. There are the themes of love in this story, but my true feeling is that love isn't the whole point of this story. The truth of this story lies within ourselves, with facing the things we need to see, even when we don't want to.

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### **Jenny says**

I want to say thank you to Northside Books for the ARC. I chose this title hoping it would be an introspective look at marriages and the issues that can arise. It ended up being a romance novel between two characters that are married to other people, with the sole point of view coming from the main female protagonist. That single perspective made me feel the book was lacking depth and something I couldn't get into. That being said, if you enjoy romances, this may be for you. I would describe it as an easy beach read, but it just wasn't for me.

