



Vince and Joy

By Lisa Jewell
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Introduction

Vince Mellon and Joy Downer meet as teenagers on vacation with their parents. They're both misfits, not used to feeling understood by anyone, and when they meet they recognize soul mates in each other. Everything feels easy and right, including talking, hanging out, and having their first wonderful experience of sex. Can anything really be so perfect?

In Lisa Jewell's exquisite novel, the answer is of course "no," and the way she works out the obstacles and near-misses of this relationship is very true to the real world. At the beginning this new love is thwarted by a thing as simple as rain, which ruins Joy's goodbye note so that Vince can't read it. And as the story follows their lives and progress through wrong choices, bad relationships and confusion, Jewell reveals a genuine understanding of how easy it is to end up where you don't belong, and how common it is to settle for a life that doesn't make you happy.

This is far from an ordinary love story. But Jewell believes in magical coincidence, and Vince and Joy are not able to stumble past their destiny forever. Surely every reader will recognize some part of their own life in this tender, thoughtful novel.

Questions for Discussion

1. Joy's father is probably the most difficult character in the book. Did you come to have any compassion for him? Why or why not?
2. Jewell uses a "flashback" technique for most of the novel. Vince is, in the present, sitting at a table with friends, late at night, telling the story as he remembers it. Is this an effective method?
3. Why does Joy marry George?
4. Do you understand Joy's tendency to settle for a marriage and a life that is so radically wrong for her? Why doesn't she seem to understand that she deserves better?
5. At different points in the story, both Vince and Joy are presented with chances to reconnect, and yet they don't do it. Why do they hesitate?
6. Do you believe in the idea of "soul mates"? How would you define this concept?
7. Coincidence on an almost magical level, such as what happens with Madeleine the cat, is one of the most important elements of this story. Do you find this believable? Have you had such experiences in your own life?
8. How did you feel about the characters of George and Jess? Are they bad people?
9. Why do you think that it makes such a difference in Joy's life when she finds her biological father?
10. Did this novel give you insights into any of the choices you've made in your own life?

About the Author

Lisa Jewell was born and raised in North London, where she lives with her husband and daughter. Her first novel, *Ralph's Party*, was the bestselling debut of 1999 in the UK. She is also the author of the bestsellers *Thirtynothing*, *One-Hit Wonder*, and *A Friend of the Family*.