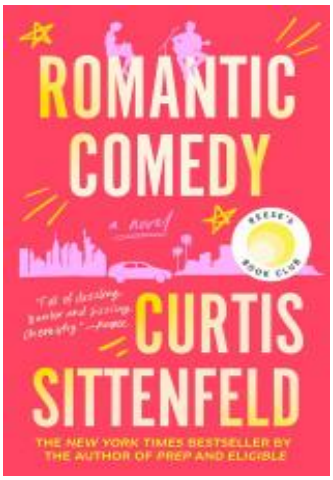
Romantic Comedy

by Curtis Sittenfeld



About the Book

A comedy writer thinks she has sworn off love, until a dreamy pop star flips the script on all her assumptions --- a ?smart, sophisticated, and fun? (*Oprah Daily*) novel from the *New York Times* bestselling author of ELIGIBLE, RODHAM and PREP.

Sally Milz is a sketch writer for ?The Night Owls,? a late-night live comedy show that airs every Saturday. With a couple of heartbreaks under her belt, she?s long abandoned the search for love, settling instead for the occasional hook-up, career success and a close relationship with her stepfather to round out a satisfying life.

But when Sally?s friend and fellow writer Danny Horst begins dating Annabel, a glamorous actress who guest-hosted the show, he joins the not-so-exclusive group of talented but average-looking and even dorky men at the show --- and in society at large --- who?ve gotten romantically involved with incredibly beautiful and accomplished women. Sally channels her annoyance into a sketch called the Danny Horst Rule, poking fun at this phenomenon while underscoring how unlikely it is that the reverse would ever happen for a woman.

Enter Noah Brewster, a pop music sensation with a reputation for dating models, who signed on as both host and musical guest for this week?s show. Dazzled by his charms, Sally hits it off with Noah instantly, and as they collaborate on one sketch after another, she begins to wonder if there might actually be sparks flying. But this isn?t a romantic comedy --- it?s real life. And in real life, someone like him would never date someone like her. Right?

With her keen observations and trademark ability to bring complex women to life on the page, Curtis Sittenfeld explores the neurosis-inducing and heart-fluttering wonder of love, while slyly dissecting the social rituals of romance and gender relations in the modern age.

Discussion Guide

1. Where have you seen the Danny Horst Rule play out in real life? What?s your opinion of it? Have you seen the reverse happen?

2. Why do you think Sally finds it so hard to believe that Noah might actually like her? Did you find it hard to believe?

3. Sally learns from her mother that we all have public and private selves. How would you describe Sally?s selves? How would you describe Noah?s? When do you think they switch from using their public to private selves with each other?

4. How would you characterize Sally?s relationship with ?The Night Owls?? Why do you think it?s so hard for her to conceive of leaving?

5. How might this novel have been different if Sally were a cast member on ?The Night Owls,? not just a writer?

6. Sally is both extremely confident and extremely insecure. How do you think these facts can both be true?

7. Discuss the different romantic relationships in the book, from Sally and Noah to Annabel and Danny to Viv and Dr. Theo. How would you describe each couple? Which relationship feels most like your own, or one you?d like to be in?

8. Danny tells Sally that the Danny Horst Rule matters only if it matters to Sally and Noah themselves. Did you agree? How does this realization help Sally?

9. What did you think of the email section of the book?

10. What did you think of the ending of the book?

Author Bio

Curtis Sittenfeld is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the novels PREP, THE MAN OF MY DREAMS, AMERICAN WIFE, SISTERLAND, ELIGIBLE, RODHAM and ROMANTIC COMEDY, as well as the collections YOU THINK IT, I'LL SAY IT and SHOW DON'T TELL, which have been translated into 30 languages. Her short stories have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post Magazine*, *Esquire* and *The Best American Short Stories*, of which she was the 2020 guest editor. Her nonfiction has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Time* and *Vanity Fair*, and on public radio?s "This American Life."

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