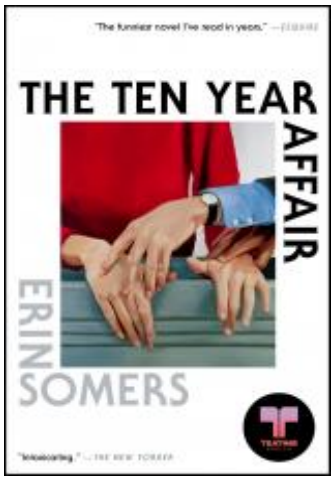
The Ten Year Affair

by Erin Somers



About the Book

A hilariously acerbic sliding doors novel about a chance meeting between two young parents, both happily married (just not to each other) that sparks a will-they-won?t-they romance --- perfect for fans of BIG SWISS and ACTS OF SERVICE.

When Cora meets Sam at a baby group in their small town, the chemistry between them is undeniable. Both are happily married young parents with two kids, and neither sees themselves as the type to engage in an affair. Yet their connection grows stronger, and as their lives continue to intertwine, the romantic tension between them becomes all-consuming --- until their worlds unravel into two parallel timelines. In one, they pursue their feelings. In the other, they resist.

As reality splits, the everyday details of Cora?s life --- her depressing marketing job, her daughter?s new fascination with the afterlife, her husband?s obsession with podcasts about the history of rope --- gain fresh perspective. The intersecting and diverging timelines blur the boundaries of reality and fantasy, questioning what might have been and what truly matters.

THE TEN YEAR AFFAIR is a witty, emotionally charged exploration of marriage, family life and the roads not taken that ultimately asks: Do we really want our fantasies to come true?

Discussion Guide

1. Cora?s romantic expectations of her affair with Sam --- affected, surely, by the fantastical love stories we all know well --- more than fall flat. As you read, did you find yourself longing for the same narrative satisfaction that Cora desires? How did the frustration of life?s awkward and mundane realities impact your reading experience?

2. Most of the characters we meet in this nameless mountain town are New York City transplants who, despite their

undeniable similarities, seem intent on distinguishing themselves from one another. How does the dissonance between individuality and the quest for community reveal itself in the book?

3. The all-consuming nature of a dearly coveted fantasy raises questions about where the line between imagination and reality is actually drawn. Is Cora only morally responsible for her affair with Sam once it becomes physical?

4. Cora admits that she and Eliot moved quickly to marriage, children and homeownership in part out of a desire to accelerate their lives forward. Have you ever felt pressure to take a certain step because you envisioned it checking a box? What have you lost (or gained) from constructing your life as a series of checkpoints?

5. From the decade-long evolution of Cora and Sam?s parallel universe fantasy, it is clear that our imagination has the power to alter the course of our lives. Are our secret daydreams destructive? Dangerous? Or are they essential?

6. Eliot seems to be the ideal, fully evolved modern husband, at least for a liberated, independent 21st-century woman. In claiming to relinquish all patriarchal ownership of Cora, he somehow disappoints her. What sorts of questions does this raise about our true autonomy when it comes to desire, partnership and gender roles?

7. Sam and Cora disparage their ?email jobs,? in part because they feel that their jobs lack a kind of concrete impact on the world. Despite their disappointment in the abstract nature of their work, they both take comfort in an imaginary fantasy. How might this inform the even deeper disappointment they feel when that fantasy becomes a reality?

8. Eliot suffers his own detachment from reality when his parents die, and he turns to his own methods of escape. One powerful takeaway from this story is that everyone tends to their own kind of 10-year affair fantasy, whether or not it?s visible to those around them. What might Eliot?s be?

Author Bio

Erin Somers is a reporter and news editor at *Publishers Lunch*. Her first novel, STAY UP WITH HUGO BEST, was a *Vogue* Best Book of the Year in 2019. Her writing has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *The New Republic*, *New York* magazine, *The Atlantic*, *Esquire*, *GQ*, *Best American Short Stories* and many other publications. She has been the recipient of an Emerging Writer Fellowship from the NYC Center for Fiction, a fellowship from the Millay Colony, and was a 2020 finalist for a National Magazine Award. She lives in New York's Hudson Valley with her family.

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