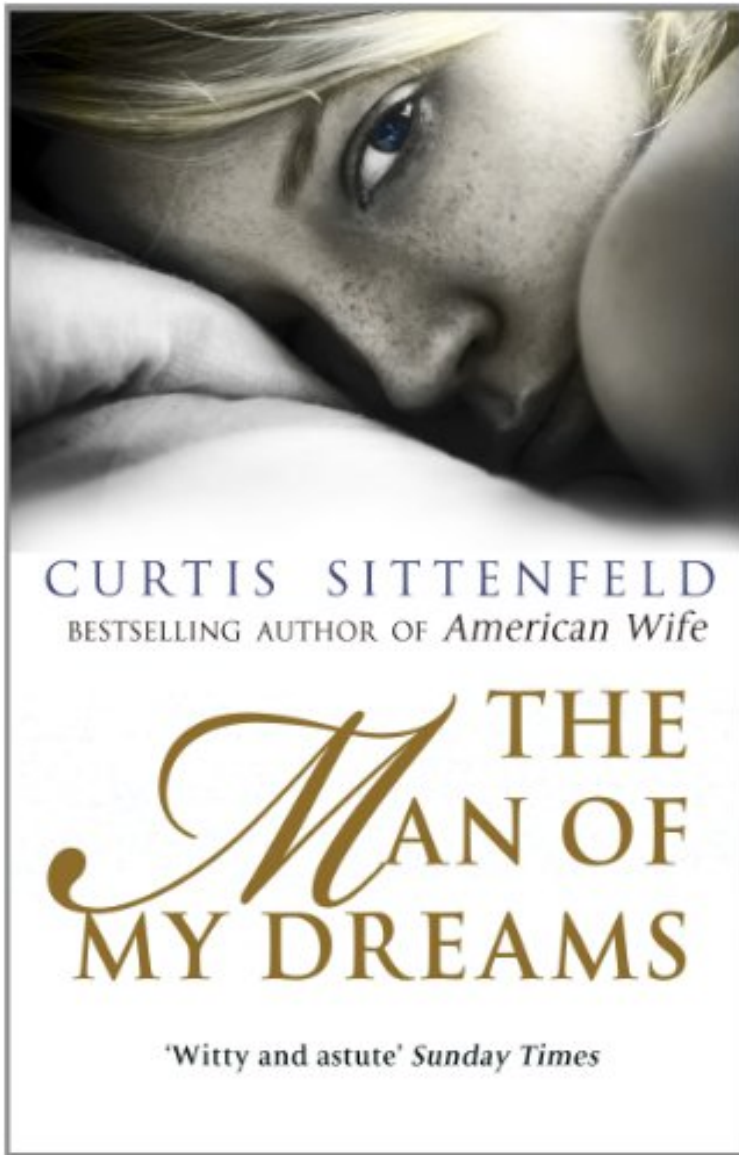


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# The Man of My Dreams



Par Curtis Sittenfeld  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur Hannah is a confused fourteen-year-old. In the magazines she reads, celebrities plan elaborate weddings; in Hannah's own life, her parents' marriage is crumbling. Over the next decade and a half, love throws her some complicated questions. At what point can you no longer blame your adult failures on your messed up childhood? Is settling for someone who's not your soulmate an act of maturity or an admission of defeat? And if you move to another state for a guy who might not love you back, are you being plucky - or just pathetic? Extrait 1 June 1991 Julia roberts is getting married. Its true: Her dress will be an eight-thousand-dollar custom-made two-piece gown from the Tyler Trafficante West Hollywood salon, and at the reception following the ceremony, shell be able to pull off the train and the long part of the skirt to

dance. The bridesmaids dresses will be sea-foam green, and their shoes (Manolo Blahnik, \$425 a pair) will be dyed to match. The bridesmaids themselves will be Julias agents (she has two), her makeup artist, and a friend whos also an actress, though no one has ever heard of her. The cake will be four-tiered, with violets and sea-foam ribbons of icing. What I want to know is wheres our invitation? Elizabeth says. Did it get lost in the mail? Elizabeth Hannahs auntis standing by the bed folding laundry while Hannah sits on the floor, reading aloud from the magazine. And whos her fianc again? Kiefer Sutherland, Hannah says. They met on the set of Flatliners. Is he cute? Hes okay. Actually, he is cutehe has blond stubble and, even better, one blue eye and one green eyebut Hannah is reluctant to reveal her taste; maybe its bad. Lets see him, Elizabeth says, and Hannah holds up the magazine. Ehh, Elizabeth says. Hes adequate. This makes Hannah think of Darrach. Hannah arrived in Pittsburgh a week ago, while Darrachhe is Elizabeths husband, Hannahs unclewas on the road. The evening Darrach got home, after Hannah set the table for dinner and prepared the salad, Darrach said, You must stay with us forever, Hannah. Also that night, Darrach yelled from the second-floor bathroom, Elizabeth, this place is a bloody disaster. Hannah will think were barn animals. He proceeded to get on his knees and start scrubbing. Yes, the tub was grimy, but Hannah couldnt believe it. She has never seen her own father wipe a counter, change a sheet, or take out trash. And here was Darrach on the floor after hed just returned from seventeen hours of driving. But the thing about Darrach ishes ugly. Hes really ugly. His teeth are brownish and angled in all directions, and he has wild eyebrows, long and wiry and as wayward as his teeth, and he has a tiny ponytail. Hes tall and lanky and his accent is nicehes from Irelandbut still. If Elizabeth considers Kiefer Sutherland only adequate, what does she think of her own husband? You know what lets do? Elizabeth says. She is holding up two socks, both white but clearly different lengths. She shrugs, seemingly to herself, then rolls the socks into a ball and tosses them toward the folded pile. Lets have a party for Julia. Wedding cake, cucumber sandwiches with the crusts cut off. Well toast to her happiness. Sparkling cider for all. Hannah watches Elizabeth. What? Elizabeth says. You dont like the idea? I know Julia herself wont show up. Oh, Hannah says. Okay. When Elizabeth laughs, she opens her mouth so wide that the fillings in her molars are visible. Hannah, she says, Im not nuts. I realize a celebrity wont come to my house just because I invited her. I didnt think that, Hannah says. I knew what you meant. But this is not entirely true; Hannah cannot completely read her aunt. Elizabeth has always been a presence in Hannahs life Hannah has a memory of herself at age six, riding in the backseat of Elizabeths car as Elizabeth sang Youre So Vain quite loudly and enthusiastically along with the radiobut for the most part, Elizabeth has been a distant presence. Though Hannahs father and Elizabeth are each others only siblings, their two families have not gotten together in years. Staying now in Elizabeths house, Hannah realizes how little she knows of her aunt. The primary information she has always associated with Elizabeth was acquired so long ago she cannot even remember learning it: that once, soon after Elizabeth became a nurse, a patient left her a great deal of money and Elizabeth squandered it. She spent it on an enormous party, though there was no occasion, not even her birthday. And shes been struggling to make ends meet ever since. (Hannah has been surprised to find, however, that her aunt orders takeout, usually Chinese, on the nights Darrach is gone, which is at least half the time. They dont exactly act like theyre struggling to make ends meet.) It didnt help, financially speaking, that Elizabeth married a truck driver: the Irish hippie, as Hannahs father calls him. When she was nine, Hannah asked her mother what hippie meant, and her mother said, Its someone fond of the counterculture. When Hannah asked her sisterAllison is three years oldershe said, It means Darrach doesnt take showers, which Hannah has observed to be untrue. Would we have our party before or after the wedding? Hannah asks. She gets married on June fourteenth. Then, imagining it must appear on the invitations like this, all spelled out in swirly writing, she adds, Nineteen hundred and ninety-one. Why not on the fourteenth? Darrach can be my date, if hes here, and Rory can be yours. Hannah feels a stab of disappointment. Of course her date will be her eight-year-old retarded cousin. (Thats the final piece in the puzzle of Elizabeths financial downfall, according to Hannahs father: that Rory was born with Downs. The day of Rorys birth, her father said to her mother, as he stood in the kitchen after work flipping through mail, Theyll be supporting that child all the way to their graves.) But what did Hannah think Elizabeth was going to say? Your date will be the sixteen-year-old son of one of my coworkers. He is very handsome, and hell like you immediately. Sure, Hannah expected that. She always thinks a boy for her to love will fall from the sky. I wish I could find my wedding dress for you to wear at our party, Elizabeth says. I wouldnt be able to fit my big toe in it at this point, but youd look real cute. Lord only knows what I did with it, though. How can Elizabeth not know where her wedding dress is? Thats not like losing a scarf. Back in Philadelphia, Hannahs mothers wedding dress is stored in the attic in a long padded box, like a coffin. I gotta put the other

load in the dryer, Elizabeth says. Coming? Hannah stands, still holding the magazine. Kiefer bought her a tattoo, she says. Its a red heart with the Chinese symbol that means strength of heart. In other words, Elizabeth says, he said to her, As a sign of my love, you get to be poked repeatedly by a needle with ink in it. Do we really trust this guy? They are on the first floor, cutting through the kitchen to the basement steps. And do I dare ask where the tattoo is located? Its on her left shoulder. Darrach doesnt have any tattoos, does he? Even though thats, like, a stereotype of truck drivers? Is this a rude question? None hes told me about, Elizabeth says. She appears unoffended. Then again, most truck drivers probably arent tofu eaters or yoga fanatics. Yesterday Darrach showed Hannah his rig, which he keeps in the driveway; the trailers he uses are owned by the companies he drives for. Darrachs current route is from here in Pittsburgh, where he picks up axles, to Crowley, Louisiana, where he delivers the axles and picks up sugar, to Flagstaff, Arizona, where he delivers the sugar and picks up womens slips to bring back to Pittsburgh. The other night Darrach let Rory demonstrate how to turn the front seat around to get in the sleeper cab. Then Darrach pointed out the bunk where he meditates. During this tour, Rory was giddy. Its my dads, he told Hannah several times, gesturing widely. Apparently, the rig is one of Rorys obsessions; the other is his bus drivers new puppy. Rory has not actually seen the puppy, but discussion is under way about Elizabeth taking Rory this weekend to visit the bus drivers farm. Watching her cousin in the rig, Hannah wondered if his adoration of his parents would remain pure. Perhaps his Downs will freeze their love. After Elizabeth has moved the wet clothes into the dryer, they climb the basement steps. In the living room, Elizabeth flings herself onto the couch, sets her feet on the table, and sighs noisily. So whats our plan? she says. Darrach and Rory shouldnt be back from errands for at least an hour. Im taking suggestions. We could go for a walk, Hannah says. I dont know. She glances out the living room window, which overlooks the front yard. The truth is that Hannah finds the neighborhood creepy. Where her family lives, outside Philadelphia, the houses are separated by wide lawns, the driveways are long and curved, and the front doors are flanked by Doric columns. Here, there are no front porches, only stoops flecked with mica, and when you sit outside the last few nights, Hannah and Elizabeth have gone out there while Rory tried to catch fireflies you can hear the televisions in other houses. The grass is dry, beagles bark into the night, and in the afternoon, pale ten-year-old boys in tank tops pedal their bikes in circles, the way they do on TV in the background when some well-coiffed reporter is standing in front of the crime scene where a seventy-six-year-old woman has been murdered. A walk is not a bad idea, Elizabeth says, except its so damn hot. Then the living room, the whole house actually, is quiet except for the laundry rolling around downstairs in the dryer. Hannah can hear the ping of metal buttons against the sides of the machine. Lets get ice cream, Elizabeth says. But dont bring the magazine. She grins at Hannah. I dont know how much more celebrity happiness I can take. Hannah was shipped to Pittsburgh. She was sent away, put on a Greyhound, though Allison got to stay in Philadelphia with their mother because of exams. Hannah thinks she should still be in Philadelphia for the same reason because of exams. But Hannah is in eighth grade, whereas Allison is a high school junior, which apparently means that her exams matter more. Also, Hannah is viewed by their parents as not just younger but less even-keeled, and therefore potentially inconvenient. So Hannahs school year isnt even finished, but she is here with Elizabeth and Darrach indefinitely. From Publishers Weekly Sittenfelds poignant if generic follow-up to her bestselling debut, *Prep*, similarly tracks a young woman's coming-of-age, but rather than navigating an elite school's nasty and brutish social system, this time the narrator contends with a dysfunctional family and her own yearnings for love. Fourteen-year-old Hannah Gavener is abruptly shipped off from Philadelphia to live with her aunt in Pittsburgh when her mercurial, vindictive father breaks up his marriage and family, which includes Hannah's older sister, Allison, and their browbeaten mother. Sweet but insecure and passive, Hannah had "been raised... not to be accommodated but to accommodate," an upbringing that hobbles all her subsequent relationships. The novel follows Hannah through her teens and late 20s (from 1991 to 2005), as she searches for romantic fulfillment, navigates friendships (e.g., with her larger-than-life cousin Fig) and alternately tries to reconcile with her father and distance herself from him. But the most influential connection Hannah makes is with her psychiatrist, Dr. Lewin, whom she begins seeing her freshman year at Tufts. Although the novel aspires to be taken seriously and Hannah is a sympathetic protagonist, she remains a textbook case of a young woman who wants "a man who will deny her. A man of her own who isn't hers." Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.