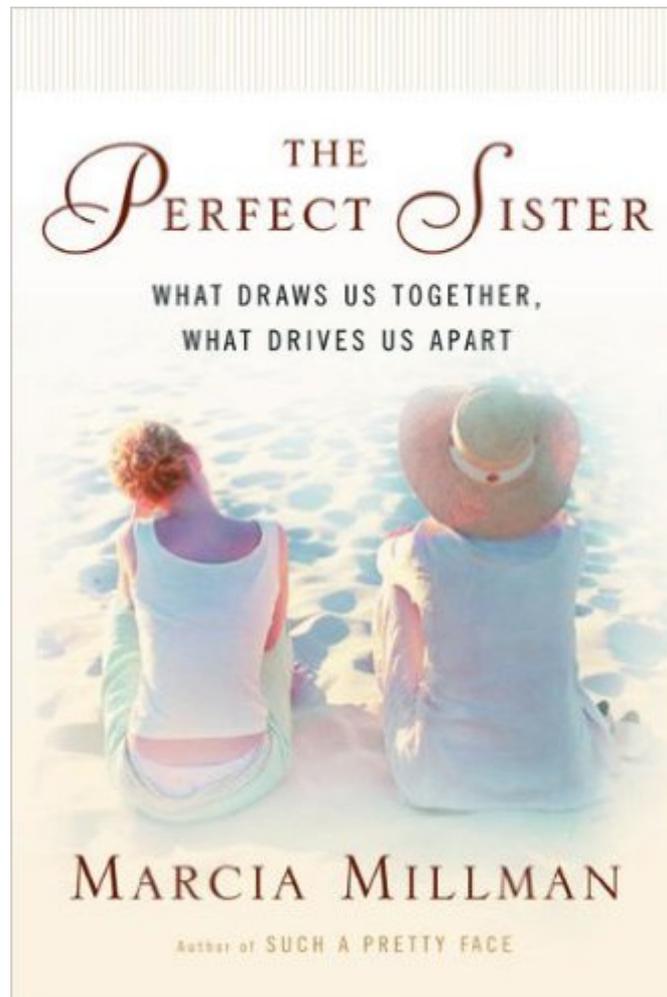


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The Perfect Sister: What Draws Us Together, What Drives Us Apart



Synopsis

Sisterhood is one of the most complicated relationships anyone can have. Throughout their lives, sisters are confidantes, competitors, touchstones for shared memories, and, sometimes, each other's harshest critics. Our siblings are our first peers and often our last link to our families. But, sisters who grow up under the same roof actually experience very different families; they inhabit distinct positions, express unique talents, and elicit different responses from their parents. Marcia Millman has spent hundreds of hours interviewing sisters to examine how these complex bonds are formed and how they keep changing throughout life, for better and for worse. Millman has discovered that adult sisters who are close are those able to fully appreciate the different realities they experienced as children. In this book there are sisters who were always close and sisters who became friends later; there are sisters who shared their childhoods but developed painful rifts as adults. But even those who are at odds often feel deeply attached - perhaps because, as Millman finds, the sister bond is inseparable from a woman's connection to her mother. Still, all of us can transform our relationships, as long as we relate to the sister in the present, and not just to the sister of the past. Here we learn about our sisters, our families, and ourselves. And the moving stories in this book offer the key to understanding, appreciating, and enriching this lifelong, incomparable bond.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Marcia Millman tackles a emotionally fraught bond- that of sisters. I found her approach

intriguing-using oral history, interviewing the sisters separately. The wake-up call for me was seeing how differently the sisters viewed their roles, family, relationships, and even basic details of their family history. This really struck a nerve in my own sister relationship, which I value greatly but has not been without challenges. Her advice to accept your sister's history and to move on from there was valuable. There is no need to set ledgers straight; accept her right to have a different perspective. After reading so many stories, the thread came across- the sister relationship is important in how we view ourselves and our family. It's not just about jealousy and sibling rivalry-at some time it may be one of your only connections to your family, so it's important to study and pay attention to this often-dismissed relationship. Marcia Millman has let her subjects speak, and provided important insight without being overbearing.

Millman doesn't believe "the perfect sister" exists, although she does describe a few who come very close. I found this book a curious mix of discussions about types of sisters (The Outsider Sister, The Wishful Sister) and lengthy biographies of families, rather than siblings. I wanted to read more about the sisters and less about the mothers and fathers who created them because, as the author admits, "sisters play a huge role in our childhood and identities."

I have sisters and I related to any of the stories here. And the perspective the author has becomes more relevant to me as we get older and our family has gone through many phases of experience, such as the death of a parent. Experiences such as these can really bring out the best or worst in how we relate to each other.

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