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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Graeme Simsion is the author of the #1 bestseller *The Rosie Project*, which has been optioned for film by Sony Pictures, was a Globe and Mail Best Book of the Year, and won the Australian Book Industry Association Book of the Year. *The Rosie Effect* was also a #1 Globe and Mail bestseller, an instant *New York Times* bestseller, and a *People* magazine Pick of the Week. Simsion's most recent novel, *The Best of Adam Sharp*, has also been optioned for film. *Two Steps Forward* is his first novel co-written with his wife, Anne Buist.

- Bookreporter

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do Don's Asperger's conditions help him or hinder him? Does Don's having Autism offer any advantages in his life?

2. Don goes through a number of spectacularly bad dates. What have been some of your own dating nightmares?

3. Where do you fall on the spectrum between structure and chaos in life? Are you highly rigid in your routines or very relaxed?

4. Do you agree with Don's assessment that "humans often fail to see what is close to them and obvious to others"? (p. 88)

5. What do you think of Gene and Claudia's relationship? Do you know anyone in an open marriage? Can it work?

6. Don says that the happiest day of his life was spent at the Museum of Natural History. Do you have a happiest day of your life? Or is there a special place where you are happiest?

7. As Don's affection for Rosie grows, he becomes aware of his instincts overriding reason. What is the role of instinct versus reason when it comes to choosing a life partner?

8. Do you have anyone on the Autism spectrum in your life?

9. Don watches a number of movies to try to learn about romance, including *When Harry Met Sally, The Bridges of Madison County, An Affair to Remember,* and *Hitch.* What are your top five romantic movies?

10. Have you ever had a moment of breaking out of your routine and opening up in a significant way? Or has someone broken through your routine for you?

11. Is it smart to have a list of criteria for a potential partner or is it limiting?

12. Don gets in trouble with the dean for using the genetics lab for his personal project with Rosie. Is it ever okay to break the rules in order to help someone?

13. Do you feel happy for Don when he "eliminates a number of unconventional mannerisms" (p. 268) in order to win Rosie, or has he lost something?

14. Does Gene get his comeuppance?

15. Were you surprised at the ultimate revelation of Rosie's biological father? Did you suspect someone else?

- http://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Rosie-Project/Graeme-Simsion/9781476729091/reading_group_guide

BOOK REVIEWS

Publishers Weekly
/* Starred Review */ Read-out-loud laughter begins by page two in Simsion's debut novel about a 39-year-old genetics professor with Asperger's—but utterly unaware of it—looking to solve his Wife Problem. Don Tillman cannot find love; episodes like the Apricot Ice Cream Disaster prevent so much as a second date with a woman. His devised solution is the Wife Project: dating only those who "match" his idiosyncratic standards as determined by an exacting questionnaire. His plans take a backseat when he meets Rosie, a bartender who wants him to help her determine her birth father's identity. His rigidity and myopic worldview prevents him from seeing her as a possible love interest, but he nonetheless agrees to help, even though it involves subterfuge and might jeopardize his position at the university. What follows are his utterly clueless, but more often thoroughly charming exploits in exploring his capacity for romance. Helping Tillman are his only two friends, an older, shamelessly philandering professor, and the professor's long-suffering wife, who may soon draw the line in the sand. With Asperger's growing visibility in pop culture in recent years, as on CBS's The Big Bang Theory, this novel is perfectly timed. Agent: David Forrer, Inkwell Management. (Oct.) --Staff (Reviewed July 1, 2013) (Publishers Weekly, vol 260, issue 26, p)
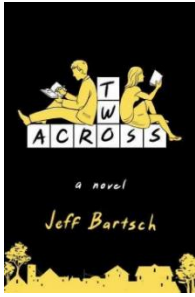
Library Journal

Don Tillman is a scientist. He thinks logically and approaches the world in a similar manner. Hence, when he needs to find a wife, he creates a long and involved questionnaire to winnow out unsuitable choices. (His requirements: nonsmoker, body mass index under 26, punctual, mathematically literate, a meat eater, and so on.) The 16-page, double-sided, scientifically valid document, he believes, offers his best chance of finding the perfect partner. That is, until he meets the fiery and intelligent Rosie Jarman. Rosie, who doesn't meet any of his requirements, is trying to track down her biological father, and she needs Don's expertise in genetics to do it. The two pursue their quests in tandem, but gradually, as their relationship deepens, their missions converge. VERDICT Readers will root for Don and Rosie throughout Simsion's delightful romantic comedy. Fans of the TV show The Big Bang Theory will see shades of Sheldon and Penny in these characters. [See Prepub Alert, 4/29/13; this title was also touted at the fifth annual BEA Librarians Shout and Share panel.—Ed.]— Robin Nesbitt, Columbus Metropolitan Lib., OH --Robin Nesbitt (Reviewed September 1, 2013) (Library Journal, vol 138, issue 16, p104)
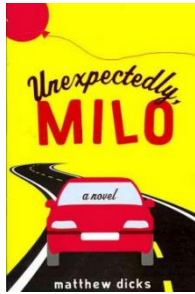
Kirkus Reviews

/* Starred Review */ Polished debut fiction, from Australian author Simsion, about a brilliant but emotionally challenged geneticist who develops a questionnaire to screen potential mates but finds love instead. The book won the 2012 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an unpublished manuscript. "I became aware of applause. It seemed natural. I had been living in the world of romantic comedy and this was the final scene. But it was real." So Don Tillman, our perfectly imperfect narrator and protagonist, tells us. While he makes this observation near the end of the book, it comes as no surprise--this story plays the rom-com card from the first sentence. Don is challenged, almost robotic. He cannot understand social cues, barely feels emotion and can't stand to be touched. Don's best friends are Gene and Claudia, psychologists. Gene brought Don as a postdoc to the prestigious university where he is now an associate professor. Don is a cad, a philanderer who chooses women based on nationality--he aims to sleep with a woman from every country. Claudia is tolerant until she's not. Gene sends Rosie, a graduate student in his department, to Don as a joke, a ringer for the Wife Project. Finding her woefully unsuitable, Don agrees to help the beautiful but fragile Rosie to learn the identity of her biological father. Pursuing this Father Project, Rosie and Don collide like particles in an atom smasher: hilarity, dismay and carbonated hormones ensue. The story lurches from one set piece of deadpan nudge-nudge, wink-wink humor to another: We laugh at, and with, Don as he tries to navigate our hopelessly emotional, nonliteral world, learning as he goes. Simsion can plot a story, set a scene, write a sentence, and finesse a detail. A pity more popular fiction isn't this well-written. If you liked Australian author Toni Jordan's Addition (2009), with its math-obsessed, quirky heroine, this book is for you. A sparkling, laugh-out-loud novel. (Kirkus Reviews, April 15, 2013)

READALIKES

Two Across by Jeffrey Bartsch

Stanley and Vera, academically precocious but awkward teenagers, form a bond when they tie for first place in the National Spelling Bee. Though their mothers have big plans for them, neither wants to follow these pre-determined paths. So Stanley hatches a plan to marry Vera in a sham wedding for financial freedom. In enlisting Vera to marry him, he neglects one variable: she's secretly in love with him, which dooms his plan to disaster. Once he's lost her, Stanley tries to atone for his mistakes and win her back using coded messages in crossword puzzles-but can he find her again before it's too late?

Unexpectedly Milo by Matthew Dicks

Stumbling on a video confession detailing a decade-old missing-persons cold case, the neurotic Milo embarks on a madcap journey to solve the mystery, which enables unexpected personal revelations.

The Helpline by Katherine Collette

An eccentric woman who is great with numbers—but not so great with people—realizes it's up to her to pull a community together.