

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# EMILY GIFFIN

Meant to Be



**BOOK CLUB KIT**



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# A NOTE FROM EMILY



Dear Reader:

Ever since I was a little girl, I have been fascinated by the Kennedy family. They captured the imagination of a nation and, beyond politics, they captured our hearts. I was especially enchanted by John F. Kennedy, Jr. and his wife, Carolyn Bessette-Kennedy: his charm, her style, their love. They were 90s icons and their sudden, tragic death in that 1999 plane crash shook the nation and world.

As a writer, I often ask myself *what if?* And it is this question that I always return to when I think of John and Carolyn. What if John hadn't flown his plane that night? What would the two have done with their lives? Would they have survived the flashbulbs that followed them everywhere? Would they have found their happily-ever-after? *Meant to Be* seeks to answer these questions through the lens of purely fictional characters, Cate and Joe.

I hope that you enjoy this *Meant to Be* kit, which includes discussion questions for your book club; recipes inspired by Cate and Joe's first date in Paris; a 90s playlist to make your heart swoon; and much more!

XO,  
EG

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Meant to Be* is told from two points of view, Cate's and Joe's. How did this technique affect your reading experience and connection to the characters?
2. Among the novel's multiple themes—grief and loss, love and attraction, secrecy and connection—is there one that resonates most with you? Explain.
3. Discuss the title, "Meant to Be." How do you think it relates to the overall story? How does it apply to each of the characters?
4. In what ways does the past influence the present in *Meant to Be*? How do the characters try to repress or escape the pain of their histories? What does the novel tell us about the relationship between past and present? How does this affect the characters' interpersonal relationships and help them heal?
5. Cate's unexpected romance with Joe quickly develops into a passionate love story, changing her life forever. Along the way, Cate learns how to open up again. Discuss a time when you had to be vulnerable to develop a new relationship.
6. How does this book convey the ways in which human beings are shaped and altered by their encounters and relationships with one another? You might choose to discuss, for example, how children are influenced by their parents or how certain characters are motivated to differentiate themselves from those of previous generations.
7. Both Cate and Joe have deep wounds from the past, which continue to fester. Cate realizes that there won't be any resolution until they are healed. Discuss conflicts in your own life that originate/d from past wounds. How can / did you work past them?
8. Emily Giffin's writing has a strong focus on causality, or how certain events and choices have life-altering effects on individuals. What examples of cause and effect can you pull from the novel, and how do you think things would have turned out differently had these instances not occurred?
9. What did you think about the ending—were you satisfied or disappointed with it? How do you picture the Cate and Joe's lives after the story closes?
10. Did *Meant to Be* prompt you to question your understandings and definitions of love and marriage? In what ways does it convey that love, or the love one might have for a partner or family member, is not static, but fluid or malleable, taking different forms at different moments in time?

# STEAK AU POIVRE

Grab a bottle of wine, light a candle, and prepare this delectable French dish for a romantic transatlantic escape . . . because “Paris is never a bad idea.”



## INGREDIENTS:

1 to 2 tbsp. whole black peppercorns, coarsely crushed  
1 tbsp. fleur de sel  
Two 6 to 8 oz steaks, filet mignon  
1 tbsp. butter  
1 tbsp. olive oil  
¼ cup Cognac or brandy  
½ cup heavy cream

## DIRECTIONS:

With a mortar and pestle, coarsely crush the peppercorns, then add the fleur de sel, and give a few more turns with the pestle. Spread out the mixture on a large plate. Press steaks directly onto the salt and pepper mixture on both sides.

In a heavy skillet heat the butter and olive oil until sizzling hot. At a near high heat, cook the steaks on each side for 2 to 3 minutes, depending on the thickness. Remove the steaks with a pair of tongs.

Remove the pan from the heat and wait for about a minute to let it cool slightly. Add the cognac and stand back! The cognac will practically ignite and then quickly boil down. With the heat still off, add the cream and then bring back to a low heat until it boils and thickens, about 2 to 3 minutes.

Return the steaks to the skillet, completely coat with the mixture and serve immediately.

Source: [parisinsidersguide.com/steak-au-poivre.html](http://parisinsidersguide.com/steak-au-poivre.html)

# MARGARITA

El Teddy's, once the crown jewel of NYC "downtown cool," has sadly closed. But relive those golden years with this classic margarita recipe.



## INGREDIENTS:

1 lime wedge, plus 2 lime wheels for garnish  
1 tbsp. coarse salt, for glass rims  
4 oz. (120 ml) high-quality blanco tequila  
2 oz. (60 ml) Cointreau  
1 ½ oz. (45 ml) fresh juice from 2 limes

## DIRECTIONS:

Run lime wedge around the outer rims of 2 rocks glasses and dip rims in salt. Set aside.

In a cocktail shaker, combine tequila, Cointreau, and lime juice. Fill with ice and shake until thoroughly chilled, about 15 seconds (the bottom of a metal shaker should frost over).

Fill glasses with fresh ice and strain margarita into both glasses. Garnish with lime wheels and serve.

**NOTE:** A good-quality tequila needs no sugar (beyond what's in the triple sec) to balance the acidity of lime juice.



# A MEANT TO BE PLAYLIST

## [LISTEN ON SPOTIFY HERE!](#)

“Oh, Pretty Woman” by Roy Orbison

“Need You Around” by Smoking Popes

“Can’t Take My Eyes Off You” by Frankie Vallie

“Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic” by The Police

“Signed, Sealed, Delivered (I’m Yours)” by Stevie Wonder

“When I Fall in Love” by Celine Dion, Cline Griffin

“La,La,La Means I Love You” by Prince

“Kiss Me” by Sixpence None the Richer

“Loving You Tonight” by Squeeze

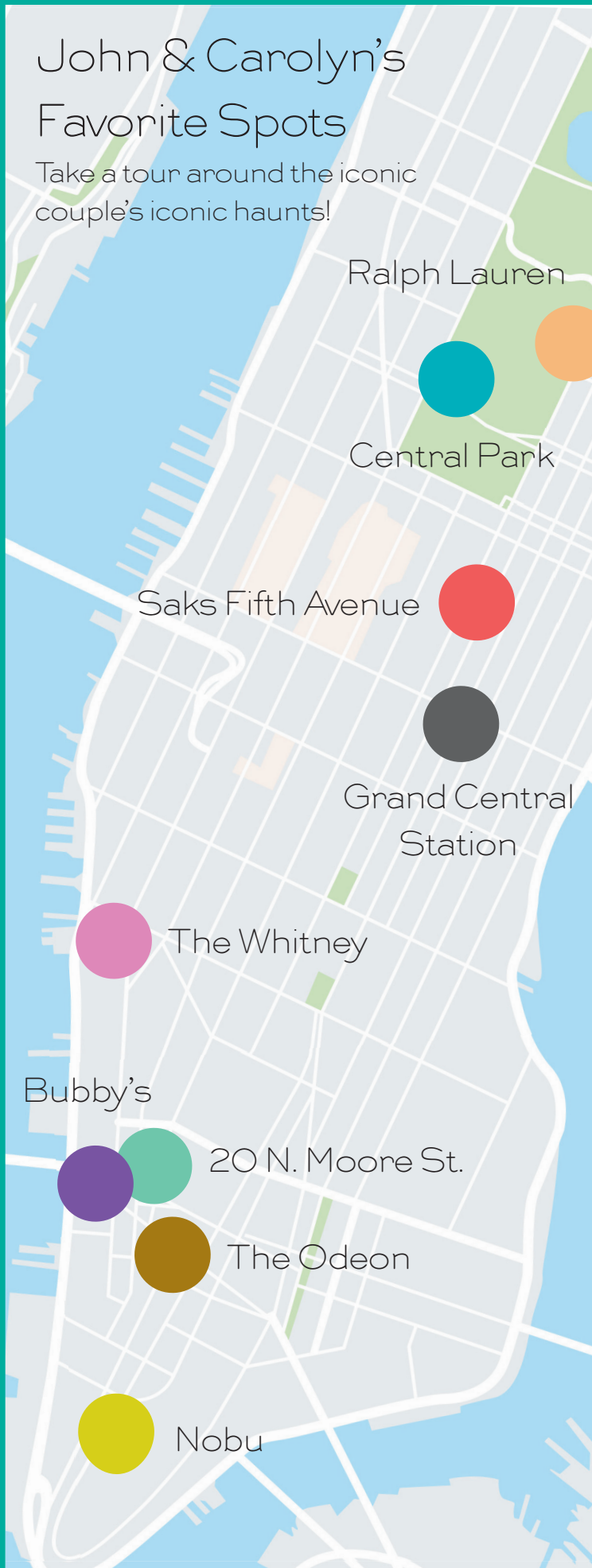
“Love Story” by Taylor Swift










“Chapel of Love” by The Dixie Cups

“You’re Still the One” by Shania Twain

# John & Carolyn's Favorite Spots

Take a tour around the iconic couple's iconic haunts!



-  **Ralph Lauren**  
Shop at one of Carolyn's favorite stores.
-  **Central Park**  
Stroll through NYC's most beloved public park, where the couple was often spotted taking long walks with their dog.
-  **Saks Fifth Avenue**  
Carolyn was a frequent shopper at this renowned department store.
-  **Grand Central Station**  
No trip to NYC is complete without visiting this historic landmark. Admire the splendor of the main concourse and have a drink at The Campbell Bar.
-  **The Whitney**  
Take a tour of The Whitney Museum where John and Carolyn attended many galas and events.
-  **Bubby's**  
Have a drink at Bubby's to cap off the day.
-  **20 N. Moore St.**  
Check out the building in Tribeca where they shared a 2-bedroom loft.
-  **The Odeon**  
Grab some dinner at the lively French bistro near the couple's loft.
-  **Nobu**  
A downtown favorite, conveniently located near their Tribeca apartment.