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A Night Out With: Emily Giffin

B.F.F., the Motherhood Years



Erin Wigger for The New York Times

Emily Giffin, center, Allyson Wenig Jacoutot, left, and Jennifer New.

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By ZOË WOLFF

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EMILY GIFFIN arrived at Cookshop, a packed restaurant in West Chelsea, expertly coiffed, bejeweled and dolled up in a spaghetti-strap chiffon confection the same butter yellow as the jacket for her latest novel, "Baby Proof." Coincidence? Well, she had just come from a book-signing appearance at the Lacoste store in Midtown.

"My husband was mad that I wasn't signing with a Sharpie," she said as she settled into a banquette on a recent Wednesday evening with three of her closest girlfriends. Ms. Giffin's husband, Buddy Blaha, is the president for corporate development at Newell Rubbermaid, which owns the pen company. "He said, 'I hope you're O.K. with my promoting Jennifer Weiner.'" It was a teasing reference to a rival in the competitive genre Ms. Giffin belongs to: chick lit.

Indeed, this summer could be catfight central. "Baby Proof," which came out in June, faces off against Plum Sykes's second novel, "The Debutante Divorcée," as well as several other talked-about debuts. But Ms. Giffin, 34, a former lawyer, needn't shake in her stilettos. Her previous two novels were best sellers. Like a literary sweater set, "Something Borrowed" (2004) and its follow-up, "Something Blue" (2005), chronicled best friends whose lives come unstitched when one steals the other's fiancé. In "Baby Proof," which is No. 12 on the New York Times best-seller list (the Book Review, Page 18), Ms. Giffin tackles another thorny issue for women in their 30's: the pressure to become pregnant. But in this wry twist on the classic relationship deal-breaker, it's the guy whose biological clock is ticking, and the girl who just says no.

Tempting as it is to draw autobiographical parallels, the book is fiction. Ms. Giffin, who lives in Atlanta, has twin 2½-year-old boys. "Remember when you couldn't tell them apart?" her friend Allyson Wenig Jacoutot said. "She would trick her husband and shuffle them around!"

Ms. Jacoutot practices at the New York law firm where she, Ms. Giffin and another dinner guest, Jennifer New, met. Ms. Giffin befriended the fourth member of this evening's party, Dana Feller, through their banker husbands years ago while living in London. As they waxed nostalgic, it became clear these women have been through a lot together — and have emerged in good shape. All were sporting huge rocks on their fingers. They all have kids.

If this was meant to be a night off from family, they were getting a C for effort. Over bottles of pinot noir and fancy entrees, the conversation drifted from drinking while pregnant to husbands who wear funny clothes (Ms. Giffin's husband has been known to trot out the lederhosen, while Ms. Feller's apparently enjoys a Russian uniform). Nannies and toys were other heated topics. (Note to Darren Star: If you're looking to make a "Sex and the City" sequel, schedule dinner with these women stat!)

Ms. Giffin piped in with some exciting news: Her new neighbor is Matthew McConaughey. "I'm setting up a lemonade stand," she said.

"A bikini lemonade stand?" Ms. Jacoutot said, needling her. A debate followed about whether the actor is hot or not.

Ms. Jacoutot: "Remember when we used to ask, 'Jimmy Smits or Brad Pitt?'"

Ms. Giffin: "I'd still take Jimmy over Brad. Brad is just a clone of whoever he's with." Onto Angelina: "Do you think she's doing good in the world, or is it just shameless self-promotion?" The jury was still out.

Speaking of self-promotion, Ms. Giffin had a bone to pick: "Why couldn't my book have been reviewed in People the week of the Brangelina baby photos? It just had to be the week before." Quick pause before she let out a knowing laugh.

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