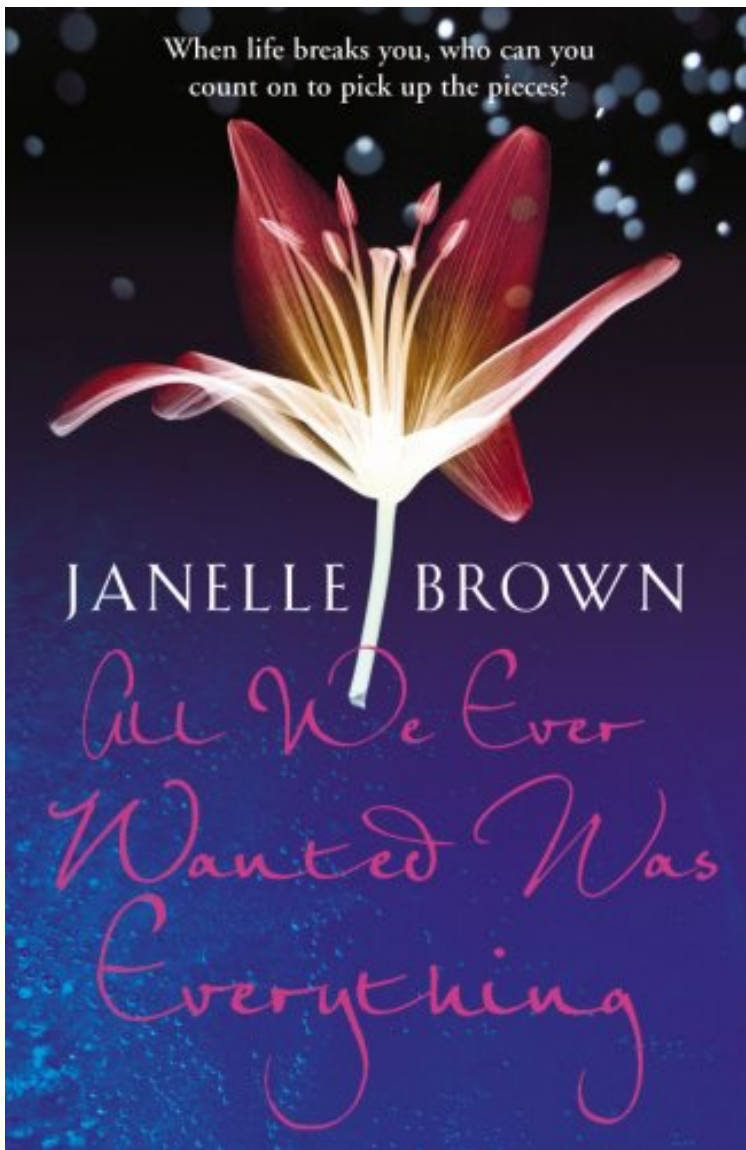


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All We Ever Wanted Was Everything



Par Janelle Brown
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurJanice Miller knows this: she loves her husband, her two spirited daughters and the beautiful home in which she has raised her family. But what she doesn't know is how to stay afloat when a devastating discovery tears that familiar world apart. It is only once the damage has been done that she finally realises how distant her daughters have become - and that schoolgirl Lizzie and 28-year-old Margaret now have dark secrets of their own. After years of following separate lives, they are reluctantly drawn back together under the same roof.It's the outside world that has unravelled their dreams, but what they all fear most now is each other. Yet it's there, in the family home, that they are forced to confront their crises - and where, slowly, each of them begins to heal.ExtraitChapter OneJune in santa rita is perfect, just perfect. the

sun sits high in the sky--which is itself just the right shade of unpolluted powder blue--and the temperature averages a mild eighty-three. It isn't too hot to play tennis. Silk doesn't stick. The pool at the club is cool enough so that swimming is refreshing, and the summer fog that usually creeps in off the ocean is held at bay, its gray tentacles undulating right off the shore. Janice Miller wakes up on the last Monday of the month to the sound of a song from her youth playing softly on the radio alarm clock. In the vast king bed, where the impression from her husband's body has already grown cold, the lyrics wash over her as she drifts up toward consciousness: "Imagine me and you, I do/I think about you day and night/It's only right/To think about the girl you love/And hold her tight/So happy together!" A frivolous little tune, one she hasn't heard in decades, and yet she can suddenly recall every word, even the cover of the album. The record had been a bribe from one of her mother's transient postdivorce boyfriends, and ten-year-old Janice had played the song over and over ad nauseam until the record finally disappeared during one of their moves. Thirty-nine years later, and Janice is once again hooked in by that uplifting refrain, the curious minor key: "So happy together!" She yawns widely; she did not sleep well the night before. Paul crept out of bed at four in the morning in order to make it to the stock exchange before the starting bell, and although he tiptoed around silently in the dark--trying not to wake her, though she really wouldn't have minded if he had kissed her good-bye, not today--she had tossed and turned for the next few hours. Really, though, she was too giddy with anticipation to sleep well anyway. This song, dredged up from the dusty archives of her consciousness, feels like an appropriate soundtrack for the day. "I can see me lovin' nobody but you/For all my life!" The refrain matches her upbeat mood. Glancing at the clock, Janice is jolted out of her reverie--it's seven forty-five, almost two hours since the stock market opened. She turns the radio to a news station, cutting off the last refrain of the song ("So happy tog--"), and climbs out of bed. She takes a shower, listening with one ear as she lingers under the two-way adjustable head, but hears nothing about Applied Pharmaceuticals. The morning news--a heat wave in the South, fifty-four dead in a suicide bombing in Israel, a congressman caught taking handouts from lobbyists--plays as she makes the bed, folding in hospital corners and placing the dozen or so pillows, shams, bolsters, and decorative blankets in their designated positions. There's still nothing by the time she's dressed in her tennis whites, and, itching with impatience, she finally goes downstairs to turn on the coffeepot. En route, she snaps on the television in the family room so she can watch CNBC through the kitchen door as she prepares an egg-white frittata with feta and roasted zucchini for her daughter Lizzie. The frittata sizzles on the stove, the nutty aroma of browning butter warming the kitchen while Janice watches the set with one eye and waits (nearly jumping out of her skin, she can hardly stand it anymore) for the commentator to drop the name Applied Pharmaceuticals. Finally, at eight-thirty, the chesty redhead perched behind the anchor desk clears her throat and turns to the camera. "And now, the stock market story of the morning, the meteoric ascent of Applied Pharmaceuticals, whose IPO shares are currently sitting at a hundred thirteen dollars and a quarter only two hours after opening bell." Janice gasps in surprise. Below the commentator, the stock ticker crawls across the bottom of the screen and--there it is, APPI, and her heart palpitates again--she sees that yes, it's true: \$113! And if Paul--if they--possess 2.8 million stock options that means The rush of blood in her ears makes it hard to hear the rest of the report: "Experts cite the strategic timing by CEO Paul Miller, riding the wave of the booming biopharm industry, for this impressive Nasdaq debut, despite the fact that the company's much-anticipated new drug, Coifex, has yet to arrive in pharmacies" Janice has the urge to scream or jump up and down or run around the house or something, but that would wake Lizzie up and alarm the neighbors. Instead, she just smiles and automatically moves back to the stove to put the frittata in the oven. Inside, though, she feels like she's exploding and wishes she had someone to share the news with, just to make it more real. She can't call her friends--it would come off as bragging. There's her elder daughter, Margaret, in Los Angeles, but Margaret always seems to be so busy with that magazine, and, considering the precariousness of their relationship these days, it's probably not a good idea to pester her at work. Besides, Margaret would probably balk at the sums of money at stake and make some kind of comment about ethnic cleansing in Darfur that would make Janice feel materialistic and selfish. And Lizzie isn't really an option either. They haven't explained to Lizzie exactly what this IPO will mean to the Miller family's bottom line, because at fourteen Lizzie is far too young to need to worry about these kinds of financial matters. Besides, they don't want it to go to Lizzie's head. Instead, she goes to the phone and dials Paul's cell. The call goes straight to voice mail, which is not a surprise--he had warned her that his day would be madness--but she leaves a message anyway. "Paul, I saw it on television," she says, trying to keep her voice calm and collected but squeaking a bit nonetheless. "And it's thrilling. We did it! Don't eat before you come home--we're going to celebrate tonight, okay? Would eight o'clock give you

enough time to get back down here from San Francisco? I am just so proud" She stays on the phone for a minute, feeling the impulse to babble on, but curbs it and hangs up. And although Janice is just a bit frustrated that, once again, Paul is impossible to get ahold of, she cheers herself with the knowledge that this is finally the end of all that. This day has loomed in her calendar for almost a year now, a period during which she has become intimately familiar with the machinations of the stock market and the vagaries of the pharmaceutical industry and the interior workings of the FDA, while, simultaneously, becoming less and less familiar with her own husband. Every few days, he has had to jet off to Reykjavik or Brunei or Kobe on the Applied Pharmaceuticals IPO road show, in order to convince investors to part with ridiculous sums of money. The rest of the time, he's been in his office in a sprawling industrial park in Millbrae, with a view of the sludgy gray San Francisco Bay, working until he collapsed on his leather couch. During the long weeks that Paul's been absent, Janice has sometimes stood before his medicine cabinet in their bathroom, gazing at the little plastic bottles of green Coifex pills lined up in a row and thinking about him. She'd taken a Coifex once, just to see what it felt like when Paul took it, curious about what it would do--not that she was going bald herself, but maybe it would bring back some of the natural blond or make her hair somehow softer--but the pill had mostly made her feel bloated. It was as big as a kalamata olive, almost too big to swallow: another innovation of Paul's, who had argued that larger pills appealed to men's need for masculine potency.

Janice thought that was a bit ridiculous; but then again, no one ever said that product marketing made sense. She kept one pill in her pocket, though, and would turn it round in her hand sometimes, fondling the pebbled surface of the pill as if it were a rabbit's foot or a good-luck charm. And that wasn't so silly after all, was it? Because the charm worked, and today the IPO is over, and it looks like those unwieldy green pills will be paying her family's bills for a long, long time to come. Which means that Paul will finally have time at home again, giving them a chance to return things to the way they were before all this Applied Pharmaceuticals insanity began. She imagines their marriage as a pendulum: They have grazed the bottom and are poised at the beginning of an upswing. The old grandfather clock in the living room chimes out the half hour, which means that it's time to get down to the country club for her tennis date with Beverly. She finishes her coffee, puts the mug in the dishwasher, and gathers her car keys, errand lists, and tennis racket. There is much to be done today; she has been planning a grand fete for tonight, something as memorable as the day promises to be. The evening lies before her, as vivid as a magazine spread: Janice, crisply attired in a flattering new dress, her family assembled around a table heaped high with a home-cooked feast, everyone tipsy on champagne, everyone so filled up with love and abundance that they could almost burst. The only disappointment is that Margaret won't be there to celebrate with them, having dispensed with Janice's request that she use her father's IPO as an impetus for a long-overdue visit home with a mumbled excuse about publishing schedules. Lizzie has still not gotten up yet by the time Janice leaves for town, so she just sets the frittata on the counter under a towel with a note (At tennis. Eat me. Have a good day. Love, Mom). Then she slips out the door, starts up the Porsche Cayenne, and drives down the oak-lined streets toward town. The low morning sun blinks at Janice through the canopy of leaves as she navigates through the residential streets.

The neighborhood is still quiet--a new local ordinance, voted into law by citizens grown weary of predawn bulldozers, has forbidden any construction before nine o'clock--and the enormous half-built villas that Janice passes on nearly every block loom blankly with their windows gaping, their gray facades still raw concrete. Sometimes it is difficult to remember how Santa Rita looked just two decades ago, when she and Paul and Margaret first moved into a modest, ranch-style home; before the technology industry explosion turned the sleepy bedroom communities of Silicon Valley into boomtowns; before the bulldozers began scraping up those postwar ranch homes and replacing them with multimillion-dollar Tuscan villas and Craftsman mansions and goliath Spanish missions complete with screening rooms and temperature-controlled wine cellars and five-car garages; before Janice and Paul and their friends realized how much money was within their grasp if only they bullied their way into it. Over the years, Santa Rita has become an enclave for Silicon Valley's super-rich; Janice has watched her friends and neighbors march into ludicrous wealth, buoyed by the information age and stock options and seven-figure salaries. It's a community made affluent by acronyms--CEOs and VCs and IPOs and MBAs--a community where the lowest common denominator is actually astronomically high. And now, Janice realizes, after years of swimming along in the wake of these wild successes--doing quite well for themselves but certainly not doing spectacularly--she and Paul have finally joined their ranks. As she drives by, Janice eyes a particularly sizable villa with a separate guesthouse and at least a two-acre lot--not that there's anything wrong with the 5,200-square-foot Colonial they moved to seven years back. Still, she can't help luxuriating in the knowledge that they could afford even better now,

if they so chose. As she pulls into town, Santa Rita's main street is coming to life. The Italian cafe expels a steady stream of husbands on their way to work with their steaming commuter mugs; in the plate-glass window of the gym, young women half-dressed in jog bras (so blithe about their public display of bare flesh, and still firm enough to get away with it) churn away on treadmills. The specialty shops and designer boutiques and gourmet restaurants remain shuttered, and in front of them, the ornamental magnolia trees that line the sidewalks are weeping soft pale petals, each the size of a child's hand, down onto the parking spots below. As she drives, she composes a master plan for the day. After tennis with Beverly, she'll get her hair done for tonight. Then, the grocery store. For dinner, she's preparing Cornish game hens with peppercorn-honey glaze, butternut-squash gnocchi with duck confit, and chocolate-lavender pots de creme, and, for appetizers, her melon puffs and maybe those lemon-ahi crostini that she was saving for next month's cocktail party. She'll need to pick up flowers, some candles, a bottle of champagne. Then her new dress, waiting at the tailor's. Janice regards her schedule with satisfaction, each errand a stepping stone on a path that will logically deposit her, by day's end, back at home. As she's driving, that song pops back into her head again. "If I should call you up/Invest a dime/And you say you belong to me/And ease my mind/Imagine how the world could be/So very fine/So happy together!" In the privacy of the car, Janice tries singing the tune out loud, thinking that maybe this will release her from its grip, but instead she just sounds ridiculous (she never could carry a tune). Randy--that was the name of her mother's boyfriend, the one who gave her the album; she remembers it now. They must have been living, where, Indiana? Michigan? Sometimes her childhood feels so out of focus. After her parents divorced when she was seven and her father moved off to Ohio (where he promptly died in a car accident), Janice's school years were spent drifting around the Midwest, as her mother found and lost work, and moved them from decrepit apartment to the spare bedroom of a relative's house to motel and back again. Mostly, her mother worked as a cleaning lady for the enormous homes on the shores of the Great Lakes, dusting porcelain knickknacks and polishing mahogany. After school, Janice would often sit at the kitchen tables of these grand houses, watching her mother mop floors, and feel a sense of protectiveness (Her mother! Cleaning their toilets!) but also shame (Her mother! Cleaning their toilets!). From those years, Janice acquired a taste for gourmet food--tinned sardines and salty caviar, boxes of water crackers and hand-cut Italian pastas and briny cornichons, which her mother fed her as an after-school snack from the pantries of her employers. Sometimes, when no one was home, she would wander through the palatial bedrooms upstairs and linger in the girls' rooms. These were studies in pink, always, and she would examine their contents like a visitor to a museum: postcards from summer vacations in the south of France, stiff sateen-upholstered daybeds heaped carelessly with porcelain dolls, snapshots of boyfriends strategically stuffed into the carved mirror of a vanity. Mementos of lives lived without fear or pain or worry. Before she left, she would occasionally take a souvenir--a mohair sweater, a silk blouse with a loose button, a scarf of snagged cashmere extracted from the bottom of a forgotten pile. She could never wear these things outside, of course. She kept her purloined wardrobe in a cardboard box at the back of a closet, behind the secondhand corduroy skirts her mother bought for her at Henny Penny's Shop-n-Save, and played dress-up as a treat for benchmarks achieved: an A on her French exam, a date at the drive-in, a scholarship offer to a good college out West. With the expensive fabrics against her skin, she would imagine herself propelled toward some shiny future that winked at her from a distance, like a mirror catching the sun and reflecting back the promise of a more perfect life. Her senior year, she reluctantly sold her collection at a consignment shop in order to help cover the car payments for their sputtering Buick, just a few months before her mother's latest useless boyfriend vanished with the keys. One kleptomaniac done in by another. In retrospect, she can almost laugh at the irony, although it certainly didn't seem funny at the time.

Revue de presse
A withering Silicon Valley satire . . . From the ashes of their California dreams, the three [women] must learn to talk to each other instead of past each other, and build a new, slightly more realistic existence but not without doses of revenge and hilarity. Brown's hip narrative reads like a sharp, contemporary twist on *The Corrections*. Publishers Weekly
A razor-sharp critique of the absurd expectations that, these days, have come to stand for ambition, *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* is wrenching, riveting, and still manages to be great fun. This is a wise, intimate chronicle of one family's struggle to take off their masks and live in the place they most feared: the real, imperfect world. Meghan Daum, author of *The Quality of Life Report*
Rarely does a first novelist write with such confidence and grace. *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* is a marvelous book. Ayelet Waldman, author of *Love and Other Impossible Pursuits*
Janelle Brown's beautiful debut explores the tiny fissures in our lives and what happens when those fissures erupt into chasms. Excruciatingly funny, unrelentingly painful this extraordinary book gives us

something only the best novels can: a glimpse of what it means to be human. Katherine Taylor, author of *Rules for Saying Goodbye* [An] unapologetically soapy mix of teen sex, quarter-life crises, food porn and mean-girl politics . . . a summery, old-fashioned page turner. Salon