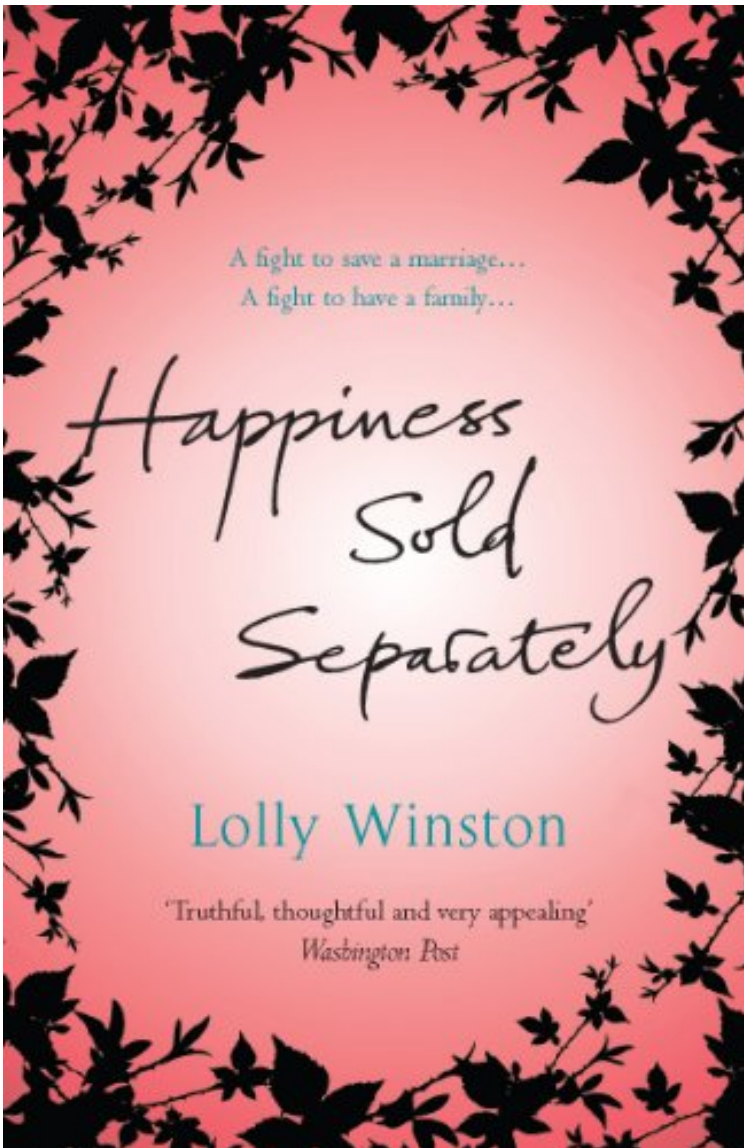


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Happiness Sold Separately



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Description : Description du produitElinor Mackey has lived her life in perfect order: college, law school, marriage, successful corporate career. But suddenly her world is falling apart. In her late 30s, she's discovered that she and her podiatrist husband, Ted, can't have children. When Elinor withdraws from Ted into an interior world of heartbreak and anger, Ted begins an affair with Gina, the nutritionist at their gym--a young woman with an oddball son who adores Ted. Meanwhile, Elinor falls in love with the oak tree in her front yard, spreading out her sleeping bag to sleep under the stars. Gina's jealous ex-boyfriend--a charming alcoholic with a mean streak--becomes a dark presence as his passion turns to violence. Ted, who may be the only one who can help Gina and her son, suddenly finds himself in love with two women at the same time. In the tradition of Anne Tyler, John Cheever, and Tom Perotta, Winston's second novel looks beyond the manicured surface of suburbia to a world of loss, longing, lust, and betrayal.

Prsentation de l'diteurElinor Mackey has lived her life in perfect order: college, law school, successful corporate career, marriage. But suddenly her world is falling apart. Now in her late 30s, she's discovered that she and her podiatrist husband, Ted, can't have children. When Elinor withdraws from Ted into an interior world of heartbreak and anger, Ted begins an affair with Gina, the nutritionist at their gym - a young woman with an oddball son who adores Ted. Meanwhile, Elinor falls in love with the oak tree in her front yard, spreading out her sleeping bag to sleep under the stars.Lolly Winston's second novel looks beyond the manicured surface of suburbia to a world of loss, longing, lust and betrayal.From Publishers WeeklyThe marriage of Ted and Elinor Mackey, a yuppie podiatrist-lawyer couple in their early-40s living in Northern California, is pushed to the brink when Elinor learns that Ted is having an affair with his trainer, Gina Ellison. Elinor's reactionpitysurprises her. Winston (Good Grief) adroitly makes it clear that Ted's affair is a symptom: infertility problems have caused years of emotional turmoil. And Gina's no bimbo: she has a loving but difficult relationship with Ted, complicated further by her young son, Toby, and his immediate attachment to Ted as a stable father figure. When Elinor confronts Ted and Gina, Ted quickly ends the affair; neither is sure if infidelity or infertility should end their marriage. During their separation, Elinor takes a sabbatical from her law firm and casually dates Noah Orch, a hunky but dull arborist. Ted haphazardly resumes his relationship with Gina. As he realizes that his connection to her is more than an escape from a bad marriage, all concerned have decisions to make. Winston has a real feel for the push and pull of a marriage in crisis, and delivers it in a brisk, funny, no-nonsense style that still comes off as respectful of the material. (Aug.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From The Washington Post's Book World/washingtonpost.comLolly Winston's warmhearted second novel is a natural crowd-pleaser that deserves critical respect as well. She tackles difficult subjects -- infidelity, infertility, a failing marriage and a troubled kid -- with honesty and empathy for her floundering protagonists. Her plain-spoken prose and a not-too-gritty resolution should make this a book-group favorite.

But Winston doesn't court popular appeal with easy laughs or shallow reassurances; her characters feel genuine sorrow and suffer real damage.In the first chapter, Elinor Mackey picks up the phone and hears her husband, Ted, talking to a woman who's obviously his lover. Emotionally exhausted after three years of fertility tests, intrauterine inseminations and in vitro fertilization, capped by an early miscarriage, Elinor can't summon up the energy to be angry: "Instead, she feels pity . . . and fatigue." Since the Mackeys decided to stop trying to have a baby shortly after Elinor turned 40, they have been drifting apart. While Elinor, a high-powered attorney in Silicon Valley, retreated to the laundry room during her off-work hours to obsessively wash and fold clothes, Ted, unable to comfort her, focused on shaping up his 45-year-old body. He met Gina, a fitness trainer, at the gym."I love you," Ted declares desperately when Elinor confronts him and Gina with their affair. She loves him, too, Elinor thinks. "But that's beside the point! Isn't it?" This combination of bitter statement softened by an almost after-the-thought question highlights one of Winston's principal gifts: her refusal to tidy up complicated feelings and conflicted human beings. Novels about a love triangle frequently falter because you can't understand what the two rivals see in the object of their affections, who's either a philandering creep or an indecisive idiot. Ted, by contrast, rings true and remains sympathetic because the author believably shows us why he cheated and why both women love him. He became a podiatrist because he likes helping people, and foot problems are mostly solvable; he doesn't like feeling helpless, so when his tenderness and supportiveness aren't enough to help Elinor through her grief, he's ripe for Gina's seduction.Gina may have hooked Ted by being sexy, but she hangs onto him by being needy. He breaks up with her after Elinor finds out; he's sucked back into her life when he bumps into her at the Country Kitchen Caf with the son he didn't know she had. Ten-year-old Toby, one of the book's best drawn personalities, is smart, motor-mouthed and difficult. Gina begs her former lover to tutor Toby through the transition to a demanding Silicon Valley school. Ted's drawn to the boy and "desperate to fill the gap between Gina and Toby, a gap he worries he's falling into." (Winston's characters are sometimes improbably well-informed about their motivations, even for well-educated, articulate people.) Unsurprisingly, he does fall, into the gap and back into Gina's arms.Meanwhile Elinor has taken a sabbatical from work.

"Somewhere along the way to becoming a successful businesswoman, [she] left her identity at the coat check," she muses, pulling on a long-discarded pair of jeans as part of her project to find out who she might really be. She flirts with various local men, relies increasingly on the friendship of her neighbor Kat and starts to research adoption. She and Ted reconcile, split up and reconcile again, prompted by plot developments it would be unfair to reveal. (Several are startling, but they're all credibly motivated and believably played out, with the partial exception of one violent scene near the end.)Winston manages to

maintain our sympathy for all three protagonists as Gina grows increasingly self-confident and assertive, Ted painfully grapples with being in love with two women, and Elinor finally reconnects with her husband by angrily telling their marriage counselor, "Maybe talking doesn't help." Stroking her hair, Ted sees for the first time in many months the shrewdly perceptive, darkly funny woman he married. When he thinks to himself, "She's doing that thing she used to do all the time, where she'd say exactly what he was thinking," it's one of the book's most touching and saddest moments. Winston sustains a tricky balancing act in her conclusion, which acknowledges loss yet affirms the possibility of growth and future happiness. Her low-key novel doesn't aspire to make big statements, but it's truthful, thoughtful and very appealing. ed by

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