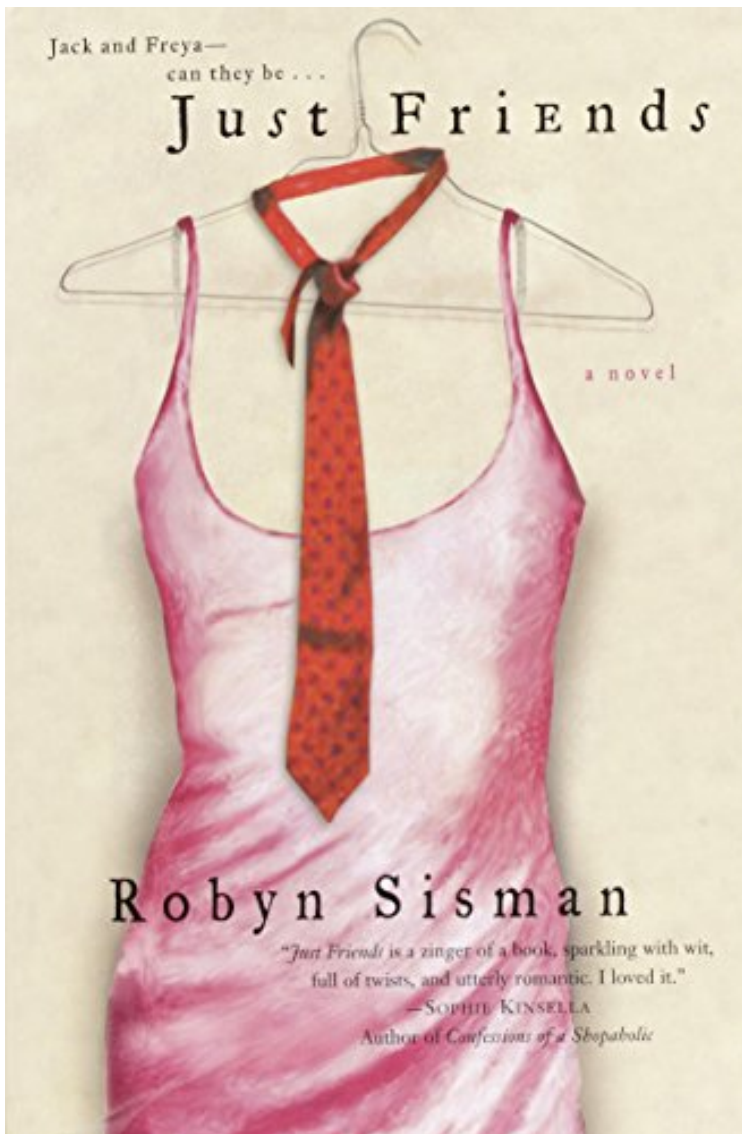


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Just Friends



Par Robyn Sisman
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Description : Description du produit Makes a perfect Valentines day gift for that perfect someone or yourself! A delightfully breezy read in the school of The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing and Bridget Jones's Diary. Freya, a British art dealer living in Manhattan thinks her live-in lawyer boyfriend, Michael, is about to propose. But when she shows up for their romantic dinner in a thousand-dollar dress and a new hairstyle, he takes her hand, looks deeply into her eyes, and asks if they can be ... just friends. Stunned and desperate, Freya arrives at long-time buddy Jack's Village apartment where she has decided to bunk temporarily. But it isn't long before tensions grow between the two old friends. Freya's caustic treatment of Jack's luscious new girlfriend, Candy, is not welcome. Nor are Jack's calls to Michael on Freya's behalf, or the personal ads that he secretly places. And to top it all, Freya needs a date and fast for the wedding of her younger sister, who has nabbed the most eligible bachelor in London. Suddenly, Jack, in all his sexy, blond gorgeousness, is starting to look more and more like wedding if not exactly marriage material. From New

York to London, and all the urban hot spots and dating disaster zones in between, *Just Friends* is a delightful, devilishly clever look at the enduring quest to find the perfect match.

Prsentation de l'diteurA sexy and hilarious new novel from the bestselling author of *Perfect Strangers*. British and ballsy, Freya is a free-spirited Manhattan art dealer who thinks her live-in lawyer boyfriend, Michael, is about to propose. So what if he's as straight-laced as she is fearless - who needs passion? But when she shows up for their romantic dinner in a thousand-dollar dress and a new hairstyle, he takes her hand, looks deeply into her eyes, and asks if they can be--just friends. Next thing she knows, Freya is paying a desperate visit to her long-time friend Jack, crashing his poker game and bunking temporarily with him. Tensions inevitably begin to rise. Freya's caustic take on Candace, Jack's luscious new girlfriend, is cramping his style. Besides, he has to finish writing the great American novel, and prove himself to his wealthy father. But he is willing to help Freya out (of his apartment, that is). Meanwhile, Freya's biggest dilemma is that she needs a date (and fast) for the wedding of the century: her younger sister has nabbed the most eligible bachelor in London. Freya desperately wants someone to show off, and suddenly, Jack, in all his sexy blond gorgeousness, is starting to look more and more like wedding - if not exactly marriage - material. From New York to London, and all the urban hot spots, watering holes, and dating disaster grounds in between, *Just Friends* is a delightful, devilishly clever look at the enduring quest to find "the one." From the Trade Paperback edition. Extrait

CHAPTER 1 Freya peeled off her clothes and stood in her underwear, contemplating her reflection. She wanted to look her best for Michael tonight. There had been no time to go home to change; she must make do with this cramped ladies' room beneath her office. Her new dress hung from the cubicle door: a cool thousand dollars' worth of palest pink that shimmered with a tracery of opalescent beads--a Cinderella dress chosen to make her as feminine and delicate as a porcelain doll. That was the look she was aiming for, less femme fatale, more . . . femme, plain and simple. Let's go somewhere special, he had said over breakfast on Monday morning, somewhere we can talk. Questions had exploded in her head like popcorn in a hot pan. Talk about what? Why not right here in the apartment? Freya had choked them back. Instead, she'd done a lot of shopping. But all week long she had carried his words around with her, a time bomb in the pit of her stomach, tick-tick-ticking as the days passed. Was this It? Was she about to become Mrs. Normal, grouching about schools and the state of her suburban lawn? With a hand that was not quite steady Freya twisted the tap and splashed her cheeks with cold water. On with the war paint. She began to make up her face--a pencil to darken the pale arches of her eyebrows, mascara to bring her light-blue eyes into focus. Which lipstick? Scarlet Woman was out, obviously. So, frankly, was Vestal Virgin, a relic of her infatuation with an artist who had left her for a seventeen-year-old. Ah-hah, Crimson Kiss, that was more like it. She slid the color back and forth over her lips, then bared her teeth, satisfactorily white against the red. I floss, you floss, we all floss. God bless American dentistry. But what if she was wrong? Maybe Michael just wanted to discuss the new service charge for the apartment, or to finalize plans for their trip to England. Freya cocked her head to fix an earring, considering this possibility. No, she decided. Michael was a lawyer, and a man: habit was his middle name. Every January he bought his suits in the sales, always two, always Armani, either navy or charcoal. He called his mother on Sunday evenings (allowing for the time change to Minneapolis), got his annual hay fever shot right after Groundhog Day, and always tipped ten percent on the nose. There was nothing unpredictable about Michael, thank God. If he wanted to "talk," he must have something important to say. Balancing precariously on one flamingo leg, then the other, Freya slid on sheer stockings, then stepped carefully into the precious dress and drew it up her body, shivering at its silky opulence. A hidden side zip pulled it snug around her small breasts, miraculously creating a discreet cleavage. She slotted her feet into flat shoes, with the faintest sigh of regret for those strappy four-inch heels she'd seen in a Fifth Avenue store. It was too bad Michael wasn't taller. She reminded herself sternly that successful relationships were founded on compromise. A few adjustments, a mist of perfume, and she was finished. Did she look the part? Freya found her brain flooding with words she had never associated with herself: fiance, engagement, honeymoon, Mr. and Mrs. . . . Daddy and Mommy. She grabbed the sink with both hands and peered close. Narrow pointed face, skin as pale as buttermilk, collar bones you could beat a tattoo on, long arms and legs--too long? She was as tall as many men: "giraffe," they had called her at school. Could somebody really love this person--for ever and ever, amen? She picked at her newly cropped hair (another hundred bucks), so fair it looked almost colorless in this light. "Freya the beautiful," her mother used to call her, named after the warmhearted goddess of the icy north who was loved by all men. But that was when she was six years old. It was impossible to know what her mother would make of her now. As she

turned this way and that, assessing this unfamiliar self, Freya was reminded of one of those ballerinas that twirled mechanically on one leg whenever someone opened a musical box. She gave an experimental twirl herself, laughing a little as her legs tangled and she almost lost her balance. The movement had dislodged a lock of hair, and as she smoothed it back she caught sight of her left hand, with its bare ring finger. Her expression sobered. It was nice to be wanted, she told her twin in the mirror. It was wonderful to be loved. She wasn't twenty-nine anymore. Yes, Michael was the one, she was almost sure. * * *The restaurant Michael had chosen was a new and very expensive place on the edge of the Village, so confident of its must-go status that Freya walked past it twice before spotting the tiny engraved entryphone. She leaned on the buzzer, and immediately the door was opened by an angelic young man with a peroxide crop. She found herself in a waiting area furnished according to the latest style edict to look "just like your own home"--if you were a millionaire. Voluptuous sofas flanked a faux fireplace. There were Georgian-style urns on the mantelpiece, magazines and "real" books artfully disarranged on low tables, even a chess set, apparently abandoned in midgame. Shallow steps led down into the dining room. From it wafted up fashionable smells and the uninhibited chatter of people utterly at ease with their own tremendous success. The name of the restaurant, she remembered, was Phood. As the young man led the way, Freya scanned the crowded tables. On one of the plump banquettes, perched somewhat stiffly between lime-green bolsters, was Michael. Sober-suited and serious, frowning slightly as he checked some document with a hovering pen--perhaps, knowing Michael, a checklist of their compatible qualities--he looked so out of place among the flashy media poseurs and Wall Street dudes that Freya's face melted into a tender, teasing smile. Her anxieties retreated. She realized that his choice of restaurant was a compliment to her, and vowed to keep any sardonic comments to herself. She would be amusing, charming, attentive--the perfect partner. She made her way down the steps, waiting for him to notice her. When he did, he looked startled, almost shocked: very gratifying. Cramming his papers into a side pocket, he leaped up from his chair to greet her with a kiss on each cheek. "Freya, you look wonderful!" "I know." She put her hands on his shoulders and laughed into his eyes, then stepped back so that he could admire her properly. "It's the new me. Don't tell me, you thought I was born wearing trousers." "No, no." Her exuberance seemed to disconcert him. "I mean, you always look fabulous." He pulled the table out so she could sit down opposite him, and resumed his position. How adorably lawyerly he looked, with his square, handsome face, serious brown eyes, and wavy hair clipped close. They would love him in England. She wondered if he'd already bought her a ring, and if so where he was hiding it. A waiter brought them menus and drew a bottle from a cooler by the table. "Champagne?" "Absolutely." Freya shot Michael a sparkling smile. "Are we celebrating?" From Publishers Weekly As she did in her previous novel, *Perfect Strangers*, published in Britain but not here, Sisman in her new novel focuses on singles life and the quest of 30-somethings for Mr. or Ms. Right. Freya Penrose, an energetic, trendy British transplant working in a Manhattan art gallery, believes she is on the verge of becoming engaged to longtime boyfriend and apartment-mate Michael Petersen, a lawyer whose stodgy outlook on life contrasts with Freya's more spontaneous approach. When their "romantic" dinner turns out to be a cool brush-off, a stunned Freya is forced to find a new home. Jack Madison, a promising writer and poker buddy whom Freya has known for 10 years, offers to share his apartment until Freya finds a new place. Freya's best friend Cat advises against it, declaring, "All men are pigs," but Freya insists she and Jack are like brother and sister. Jack, who has been stuck writing his novel for three years, ekes out a living teaching creative writing and subsists on an allowance from his wealthy, womanizing father. The two old friends take separate paths to love. A Jack dates one of his students, Freya turns to the personals ads and each finds themselves sabotaging the others' romantic efforts. When Jack volunteers to accompany Freya to her stepsister's wedding in the U.K., the nuptials bring up emotions that challenge the characters' integrity. Even Cat weighs in with a surprise of her own that forces Freya to reassess her life. With a dash of British humor and an adroit insight into family relationships and what really makes love work, Sisman's latest offering has what it takes. (Jan. 2) Forecast: There's much interest in this title: film rights already belong to Warner Brothers and David Heymann, and foreign rights have been sold in 15 countries. *Perfect Strangers* sold 150,000 copies in the U.K.; with an appropriate push from Ballantine, this one should do well both there and here. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.