



All I Ever Wanted

Kristan Higgins

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TURNING THIRTY HAS ITS UPS AND DOWNS...

For Callie Grey, coming to grips with her age means facing the fact that her boyfriend-slash-boss is way overdue with a marriage proposal. And that she's way off track, because Mark has suddenly announced his engagement to the company's new Miss Perfect. If that isn't bad enough, her mom decides to throw her a Big Three-Oh birthday bash...in the family funeral home.

Bad goes to worse when Callie stirs up a relationship with the town's single—yet not so warm and fuzzy—veterinarian, in order to flag Mark's attention. So what if Ian McFarland is more comfortable with animals? So what if he's formal, orderly and just a bit tense? Friendly, fun-loving and spontaneous Callie decides it's time for Ian to get a personality makeover. But, dang—if he doesn't shock the heck out of her, she might actually fall for Georgebury, Vermont's unlikeliest eligible bachelor....

All I Ever Wanted Details

Date : Published February 25th 2014 by Harlequin HQN (first published July 27th 2010)

ISBN :

Author : Kristan Higgins

Format : Kindle Edition 413 pages

Genre : Romance, Contemporary Romance, Womens Fiction, Chick Lit, Contemporary, Fiction

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From Reader Review All I Ever Wanted for online ebook

Holly says

This was such a fun book! It was my first time reading Kristan Higgins and it won't be my last. I loved every character, I laughed, and I'll admit I even cried. So glad that I finally picked up one of her books!

L.P. Logan says

When in a book slump, I'm convinced nothing gets you out of it quicker than a good old love story. This one managed to do that, and despite being cornier than a field of corn stalks, I found myself enjoying it. It's a quick easy read, and if you find yourself in a book jam, check it out.

Carrie says

It's been said that Shakespeare only wrote one comedy, then wrote 15 or 16 variations on the theme. That may be stretching it, but there is more than a little truth in that statement. So far, I have to say author Kristan Higgins has written 6 variation of the same story. If you've read one, you know the drill: Heroine obsessed with an unavailable and/or inappropriate man, and who acts on that obsession in embarrassing and sometimes self-destructive ways. Quirky family drama that often includes marital strife of parents; and clueless, unlikeable, or downright mean siblings. The heroine (sometimes hero) in a relationship with someone else other than the hero (heroine) for part of the book.

All I Ever Wanted is most like Catch of the Day. I happen to like this one better than Catch of the Day, because Callie had some backbone and the author didn't make her quite so pathetic. Also, although we still don't know exactly what's going on inside Ian's head, we get a better view than we ever did inside Malone's.

This book started out slow for me. It's short on romance and long on family/friend drama. I didn't care much for the side stories about Callie's family. The only ones I liked were Freddy and Bronte. I also got really tired of Callie talking about how her "girl parts" were reacting to Ian.

But to end on an "up" note: I liked Callie. While she was pathetic over Mark, she was also capable person who other people appreciated and admired. She's a strong character who avoids being the dreaded "spunky heroine." Also, Higgins wrote some hilarious dialog in this book. There are some truly wickedly funny lines! Very clever.

Elle says

You know, this was really classic Kristan Higgins aside from the fact there was no quasi-incestuous romantic relationships in this book (I think that's a first). By classic Higgins I mean that I have mixed feelings about

the book, which had elements that I absolutely loved, some I dealt with and got over, and others that made me cringe/skim/put down the book. Kristan Higgins is just like that for me. But I keep reading her because the elements I love I really do loooooove. So I continue to read her books, even when they frustrate me.

Most of the supporting characters in this book were great. Funny `character`types of characters. I thought it was great that Higgins incorporated online dating in with the heroines search for a mate ... because so many people online date these days. I thought the dates that came from online were hilarious, but that may be because I don't really think online dating is the best way to go about finding a lovvvva. Perhaps Higgins isn't championing online dating after all.

I would call this a slow-cooker romance. It take awhile to get going. We`re never really around the heat, but at the end everything is cooked up and delicious. (I found the sex scenes - or lack of - particularly hilarious. They reminded me of a PG movie where the characters are clearly going to get up to business and then sink out of the frame of the camera. So we don't get to see anything, and my 12 year old self is crushed).

There were some bumpy parts in this book. The Michelle Obama Betty Boop thing was taxing on me. Oh man! Terrible idea. And there was too much preoccupation with Mark. We all know Mark isn't the real true love interest here but in the beginning of the book there is so much Mark. We hear about their history more than once, and about the one time they got together. I ended up skimming. I hate when I have to skim.

And Ian was so tortured and standoffish for so much of the book I thought that we`d never see him open up (he did ... but my god). OHHHH And could his reconciliation speech be any worse - `You are not the person I see myself with but I suppose I love you so I can't do anything about it`. I think I would have just looked at him until her expressed his feelings in a more flattering light.

Bottom line: The book is fun, if at times a little annoying. There are a lot of similarities in plot to Higgins` other books but thankfully no romance between people who are almost siblings.

Steph Su says

The problem with reading my first two Kristan Higgins novels back to back is that, the second time around, the formula becomes glaringly, embarrassingly obvious. In one breath, here are the characteristics that, after reading just two of her books, I suspect hold throughout all her novels: a theoretically smart female MC (often a middle child with an unusual interest or hobby) with a bad history in men and who turns into idiots around men, a quirky family, a cantankerous grandparent, an over-hyper and disobedient canine pet who gets talked to in frighteningly embarrassing babytalk, eCommitment and horrible blind online dates, a gay best friend... I guess I'll stop here for now (although I'll just say: seriously, a requisite gay best friend? Isn't that so 1990s?).

Furthermore, the plot progresses at pretty much the same "ratio": for example, the requisite lovers' misunderstanding occurs at around 85% of the way through the novel. GAH. I don't know whether I should laugh at the unapologetic adherence to a formula, or cry a little.

Now, I understand that this is romance and that bestselling romance often follows a formula that everyone knows yet still loves. And yep, that's pretty much the case here. This is classic Higgins (if one who has only read two of her books is allowed to reach such a conclusion after having just dissected her formula in a disconcertingly easy way). Callie is likable (and has the requisite quirky hobby!), and her

awkwardness/stupidity around men is still infuriating yet relatable. Zany humor abounds in conversations. The dog is still annoying.

But Ian. Oh, Ian. He *totally* makes this book. Think a blond, Slavic version of Mr. Darcy, with a reticence slightly reminiscent of Asperger's but with puppy-like loyalty that is hard to earn but oh so worth it. Shy guys! Stories these days are overflowing with guys who know they're good-looking and know how to say just the right thing to get what they want. Ian, however, has NO CLUE what he's doing most of the time, as far as relationships go, which makes his rare right actions all the more genuine and truly endearing. We need more Ians in stories, that's for sure.

It's probably going to be hard for me to pick a favorite Higgins romance, because they all follow pretty much the same formula, and yet are all so much fun to read. Hopefully this review will push you in the right direction and encourage you to pick up a book by Kristin Higgins! And if you already have, well, let's just giggle and goggle and gossip together over which Higgins man we'd like to have for ourselves...

Tammy Walton Grant says

This is another of my books that has definitely benefitted from a re-read. The theme of Callie's story - that sometimes everything you think you want is FAR from what you really need - is not a new one in romance.

Kristan Higgins' take on it, though, is charming. It is also laugh out loud funny, poignant, and is going on my keeper shelf. It's a CLEAN romance as well; while Callie and Ian have **tremendous** chemisty, the love scenes are all fade to black. What we do see, however, is really well done - enough so that smutty old me barely notices the darkness. (Well, to be fair, I did on second reading but the chemistry between the leads balanced it out.)

This is the second of Kristan Higgins' books I've read in the past year or so; perhaps I should glom her backlist for the stories and characters and play out the love scenes in my head. God knows I've read enough of *those*. :)

3.5 stars the first time I read it; a year later it's getting a 4.

Tammy says

Callie Grey - short for Calliope (Homer's muse) - is turning thirty. She lives with her cranky, adorable grandfather, Noah, and is in love with her childhood crush, Mark. Mark also happens to be Callie's boss. After a brief fling, Mark dumps Callie, telling her the timing is not right for a relationship. She clings to those words and ~~wastes~~ spends the next year pining after Mark. But then Mark announces that he has a new girlfriend - a client's daughter - and he is bringing her to work for the company.

Did I mention he makes this announcement on Callie's 30th birthday?

Callie is painfully crushed, of course, and suddenly remembers she needs to renew her driver's license. She flees to the DMV where she stands in line, crying into her cell phone over her unrequited love and is rudely interrupted (and openly scoffed) by a man who is described as looking like a Russian hit man. Through a

series of mishaps, Callie learns that the rude assassin look-a-like is actually the new town vet, Ian McFarland. Callie soon develops a massive crush on said town vet and finds herself lining up with the other single gals in town at the animal clinic.

I knew I was in for a ride when Callie's 30th birthday party took place at her mother's funeral home. Kristan Higgin's books are an auto-buy for me - her books always take me through a whole gamut of emotions. I know I am guaranteed a few laughs, as well as a dash of tears. Her heroines are warm, funny, big-hearted and wonderful in spite of their flaws.

All of the typical Kristan Higgin's elements were in this book - strong family dynamic, whacky characters, lovable, furry canines, northeastern setting, and a PG-rated romance. Callie's parents are divorced - her mother is a total head case. Her sarcastic, older sister is a fertility doctor. Her little brother is adorable and her grandfather is described as "Old Northeast". I didn't care for her co-workers, especially Fleur - Callie's frenemy. Louis - her mother's mortician - was just plain old creepy. And it isn't possible to say *one nice thing* about Mark a/k/a the D-Bag.

Just a few minor complaints: I hated that the relationship with Ian did not develop until later in the book. Definitely a slow-cooker romance. Ian came across as cold and too grumpy - his past problems were not explained - and this is why I have a problem with first person POV in romance. I really wanted to hop inside Ian's head and read his mind. Also, I could have done without Callie's internal conflict. Michelle Obama was on one shoulder. Betty Boop on the other. It almost threw me out of the book more than once. Not a fan! A few minor political add-in's didn't help change my view either. I don't like politics in my romance novels.

Otherwise, I whole-heartedly recommend this book. Highly enjoyable and funny!

May says

This book was everything I love about great contemporary romance stories. No 'killers looking to strike', no 'ex Navy seals turned mercenary for hire', no vampires lurking in corners or 18th century Dukes awaiting to deflower virgins. Nope. Just a 'plain' contemporary boy meets girl romance.

(insert my dreamy happy sigh here)

The first time I discovered a story with romantic elements I was captivated. (also about 11 years old) I could read BOOKS that had love and romance and all that mushy happily ever after stuff? This book reminded me why that young lady I once was fell in love with the genre in the first place. The full emotional gamut was here - and I was helplessly hooked into each and every page. I laughed and cried more than once, sometimes both at the same time, and when I turned the last page a most wonderful thing happened.

I got THAT feeling. The one bookworms like me live for. The "that book was so amazing I wish it wasn't over! I want more! It was AWESOME!" feeling. Then I wanted to pick it back up and start looking back at my favorite parts. In other words, I've found a new favorite book.

a bit more about the book...

"Callie": Sees herself as having Michelle Obama on one shoulder, Betty Boop on the other. Needing to get over her first love but not sure she wants to. A kind and big hearted woman who never gave up on love and

tries her best to make the best of everything and everyone around her.

"Ian": Animal Vet and new guy in town. Described as looking like Russian hit man that could kill you with his pinkie. Better with dogs than people... or is he?

You need to know: Kristan Higgins writes contemporary romances in the first person (her heroine) that seem to always be set in the North East USA, have dogs, a 'fade to black' approach to love scenes, and always has a strong cast of supporting characters.

Melissa says

I never would have guessed, one happy twist of fate, four short week ago, disguised as an Audible nudge, would have sparked a new obsession in me—devouring everything and anything written by Kristan Higgins. There are *very* few times I can say I've read the same author's books in succession. Back-to-back-to-back-to-back-to-back . . . forget it. ~~No way.~~ *Scratch that.* Yes way. It's happening *now*. This finicky reader who's prone to boredom, driven by mood and the very real need to mix things up, specifically genres whenever possible, is going full-force. I can't stop. Ms. Higgins' books are unputdownable or unstoppable, if you will. Grueling Atlanta commute, cleaning the kitchen, scrubbing the bathroom, folding laundry—just about anything is tolerable when I have an *Kristan Higgins* audio to binge.

Armed with a "*happily ever after chair*" and a huge heart, Callie is by far one of my **favorite** heroines written by this author—she's smart, driven and knows exactly ~~what~~ who she wants. Callie has known Mark her entire life; he's the first boy she ever kissed, the man that owns her heart and the boss that signs her paychecks. Four years working at his advertising agency and she hasn't made much progress, as far as their romantic relationship goes. Sure, they spent a few hot and heavy weeks together before he dumped her, citing the all too convenient excuse of bad timing, but she wants it *all*. Times a tickin' though; she just joined the 30's club and apparently Mark has started dating someone new, too . . . someone he's serious about. With a nudge from her friends, Callie decides the best course of action is to find herself a new beau, someone to get Mark to snap back to reality and see what he's missing.

Described as having the cold look of a hitman, ready to take someone out, Ian isn't exactly the man she was anticipating when she made an appointment with the new veterinarian in town, hoping to score a date. A man of very few words and lots of attitude, he doesn't fall victim to Callie's charm, or at least, he doesn't let on that she's made an impression, which isn't typical for her—*everyone* loves her. Ian definitely doesn't make things easy for Callie, but what's that saying . . . *anything worth having takes hard work? or sometimes what we want isn't necessarily what we need?*

Thanks to Ms. Higgins' hilarious storyline and Xe Sands' performance (she is one heck of a narrator, by the way), Callie and Ian's story unfolded in my mind like a delectable rom-com. Let's be honest, none of her books have had to work very hard to drag the laughs out of me, but this one barely had to put in any effort. This might be one of her funniest books to-date, for me. At the top of the list, a comedian in his own right, Callie's roommate/grumpy grandfather, Noah; I absolutely adored him. Much of what came out of his mouth resulted in a hearty mix of "*did he really just say that*" or uncontrollable laughter. And her mother's assistant at the funeral home/the mortician, talk about creepy, but in such a comical way. I could easily picture his clamminess and the awkward feeling that slipped in every time he entered a room, but surprisingly enough, my heart swelled with his storyline (doing it in a casket . . . *really?!).*

Best of all though was Callie and her self-deprecation. You gotta love a girl that isn't afraid to go after what she wants, even if it means completely embarrassing herself (tight bike shorts and purge & cleanse . . . *say what?!).*

Through this lovable cast of characters, *Kristin Higgins* delivers yet *another* stellar, snarky and all-around fun read/listen. I can't recommend her books enough; especially for all you schmoopy (I had to borrow this hilarious descriptor from my friend Susanne) girls like me, the ones that share my giddiness over the perfect mix of romance and women's fiction.

Didi says

3.5 STARS

There's a method to Kristan Higgins wonderful books. The heroine is often a little quirky, maybe over pleasing, often self-deprecating. She has a big heart and a strange but loving family. Don't forget the token mutt!

The hero is usually the strong, silent type. And if not, he's not an asshole, never an over-bearing alpha, but ALWAYS a quintessential male. He'll see something in the heroine he doesn't in others, and eventually if he doesn't already, will fall madly, deeply in love with her.

There's always a healthy dose of emotional angst, hilarious moments, fantastically endearing secondary characters and a sweet and affecting romance.

Honestly, What's not to like? For me, LOVE.

This book followed the recipe mentioned above and while one might think it would get redundant, it doesn't. Every book gives you something special, something that stays with you. I really liked this one, but I didn't feel the required connection between the H/h. Ian the hero was good, not my favourite male in KH's world, but good enough. He was sweet and excruciatingly honest, but also too quiet and reserved for my liking. But truthfully, I think Callie, the heroine, needed exactly that.

Eventually when I've read all of KH's books---and I'm quickly getting there!---I'm going to feel a profound loss, she's that good.

Jan says

Sigh. I don't think Kristan Higgins is the author for me. I'm a bit sad, because I've been craving good contemporary romance after reading the excellent *Yours To Keep* by Shannon Stacey, and everybody always seems to rave about Higgins. Even though I didn't really liked the first book I read by her, *Catch Of The Day*, I thought she deserved another chance, and the plot of this one seemed to be quite up my alley.

And I was right about the plot. Callie has been in love with her boss for ages, and when he has a new girlfriend, she desperately tries to move on, which doesn't quite work at first. Enter Ian, the new vet, who's very different from Callie, as he is serious and standoffish (though that's mostly because he's shy). They don't make a very good first impression on each other, but you can't evade people in a small town, so slowly they get to know each other, become friends, and slowly fall in love.

It should be the kind of story I adore, but Higgins couldn't make it work for me. Or rather, I felt that she made wrong decisions a couple of times on where and how her conflicts played out.

For instance, there's the incredible silly laxative accident, which was slowly built-up to, and which I thought was a train wreck waiting to happen. I wasn't happy with it at all, because it felt juvenile to me, but when nothing ended up happening with it, I was disappointed. If you're going to have a main character with silly antics, at least go full force with them.

But even worse was that by the ending, there was this incredible emotional moment, that happened right after Ian and Callie's first fight. It was poignant and sad, and I thought Higgins was finally coming around because she made me cry. But then the doorbell rang and the wrong man was at the door, and I could totally see this causing a Big Misunderstanding of the worst kind. When that didn't happen I was so relieved, even though the sad emotional moment was still ruined. At least there wasn't the most predictable BM. And then that happened after all in the next chapter.

I was so angry! Not because I have anything against the particular plot point that caused the BM, but because Ian and Callie didn't need it. There were plenty of interesting conflicts around, and this one was just too easy to pile on top of those, more so because it shoved all other conflicts under the carpet.

And then I didn't like how it was solved either, because of the magnitude of the BM, the get back together speech should have been way more powerful. Instead it was sort of insulting.

I don't know. For the whole book it felt like true romance greatness was right at my fingertips, and every time I thought "Yes, now she'll hit a homerun", it all sizzled away again.

I can see a lot of people loving this, and I can even see why people love Higgins, but she just isn't the author for me.

Tasha says

*Absolutely loved it!! I laughed, I cried; it was funny, it was sad. I haven't enjoyed a Higgins novel this much since *Too Good to Be True*, which is the first book I ever read by Higgins and have been reading her ever since. I fell in love with Callie and Ian, and found myself rooting for them throughout. The entire Grey family was great. Noah, Callie's grandfather, is funny, lovable, and a absolute dream of a grandfather. Her parents are divorced, although her father is trying to win back her mother, and her sister Hester is a total riot.*

Callie thought she was in love with Mark, but it turned out to be more of a junior high crush that lasted until adulthood. She met Ian, her true love, when she was at her all time worst and they still were able to make it work, though it took some effort. Ian's great; he's somewhat shy and reserved, whereas Callie is very outgoing and has never met a stranger.

I didn't like Fleur, Callie's so-called friend, at first sight. She the kind of friend that makes you not need enemies. Mark was a complete jerk and Muriel was a total airhead. If I could have had any respect for Mark, I would have lost all of it when he started letting Muriel run the show.

*If a cute, witty, light-hearted romance is what you're looking for, you can't go wrong with *All I Ever Wanted*.*

Leona says

I have mixed feelings about this book. I loved the banter, the secondary characters and the actual plot.

However, I struggled with both the heroine and the hero. She was too needy, immature and never grew into anything different. I know she finally "got over" Mark, but only because she was in another relationship with the hero who IMHO, wasn't really great hero material. To me, he was a self-centered jerk that walked all over the heroine. In fact the scene at his ex-wife's wedding just solidified my negative feelings for him. He showed great love and compassion for his ex, but turned around and treated the heroine like a convenience. There wasn't anything of value between them outside of their fantastic sex life.

I'm giving this two stars because the writing is excellent, the secondary characters really delivered and there were some very fun LOL moments. But, the romance was extremely disappointing.

Karen says

Loved the book, but I had a bit of trouble warming up to the hero in this one. Not even the sappy ending could convince me to like him. What a backhanded declaration of love that was. Well, on to the next one!

willaful says

RRRJessica recently blogged claiming that Kristin Higgins writes women's fiction, not romance. I see her point. *All I Ever Wanted* sounds like it's somewhat closer to traditional romance than Higgin's other books, but it still spends a good deal of time on the heroine's family, career and relationship with someone other than the book's hero, in proportion to time spent on the primary romance. And apparently some romance readers find this unsatisfying.

I'm not one of them. Call it women's fiction, call it chick-lit, call it "Fiction with strong romantic elements," whatever, I really enjoyed it. It's well-written, funny, engaging fiction, and people fall in luv, and that's good enough for me.

In fact, I would make a case that the time spent on other elements in the book actually *work* for the primary romance. In this case, our hero Ian is a quiet, withdrawn, difficult to approach man. (Narrator Callie describes him as having a "splash of Aspergers"; as the mother of a boy with Aspergers, I'm somewhat ambivalent about that, but I'll let it go.) The two really *need* time to develop a believable relationship and to sort out some inevitable "opposites-attract" type conflicts. And Callie needs to grow as a person and sort out some past issues to be ready for a relationship with Ian.

So yes, that does make this chick-lit. But it's good though.

