



The Life You've Imagined

Kristina Riggle

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Are you living the life you imagined? Is there anything you'd have done differently if you could? Those are the questions asked in Kristina Riggle's unforgettable new novel.

In high school, Cami and Anna were as close as they could be...now, years later, both have returned to their hometown to face the people they had once left behind. Anna must confront her mother, still distraught over the abandonment of her husband, and come to terms with choices she had made years before. While Cami returns home to stay with her alcoholic father, she uncovers a secret he sought to keep which could change her life and salvage her future. They reconnect with their classmate, Amy, who can't understand why achieving the thin body and handsome man of her dreams hasn't given her the happily-ever-after she desired.

This is a novel that digs deep and touches the heart of the issues so many women face-the quest for perfection, the hope of love, the value of family and importance of always striving for your dream.

The Life You've Imagined Details

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From Reader Review The Life You've Imagined for online ebook

Shonda says

Are you living the life you've imagined? In Kristina Riggle's second novel, four women ask themselves this very question. Anna is a lawyer living in Chicago. She left her small hometown of Haven as quickly as she could without looking back. She's made a new life for herself, a life she is proud of. She's worked hard and is up for Partner at her law firm. All this changes when her mentor and close friend, August, dies. Much to her chagrin she's asked to take bereavement leave to cope with her grief. For all intent and purposes, her time home was only supposed to be for a little while. Funny how life can detour your plans.

Cami has also returned home. She and Anna are high school friends. The two women part ways shortly after graduation. Cami is a tutor and recently broke up with her boyfriend. She has no place to go after he learns of her gambling addiction. Her father is an abusive alcoholic and doesn't care much for Cami's return home. He allows it with a condition: she must never go into his bedroom. Naturally this causes Cami to wonder what is it he is hiding from her.

Maeve is Anna's mother. She owns the Nee Nance store and resides in the apartment above the store. She was once married to Robert, Anna's father, and he left them when Anna was a little girl. Now, Robert is back in her life and wants a second chance. Maeve is hesitant at first, but eventually her love for Robert gets the best of her and she begins answering his letters. Fate may be kind to her this time as his plans to start over come when Maeve's lease for the store is up. Maybe she won't have to spend the rest of her life alone.

Amy is marrying into one of Haven's wealthiest families. Amy feels very lucky to have met Paul. In high school she was quite overweight and none of the boys paid her any attention. Now in her mid-30s, she's lost a lot of weight (thanks to running every morning) and is determined to stay that way. Even if it costs her her happiness.

In her second novel, Riggle examines the dreams and hopes we had growing up and in early adulthood. Each woman is at a turning point in her life and comes to face the question: is this the life that I've imagined? As each woman struggles with this answer, Riggle takes us back to their past to help the reader fully understand the path taken that has brought each woman to the fork in the road. Told in alternating chapters, Riggle does a fantastic job of giving each woman her own voice.

I'd admit after reading *Real Life & Liars* last year, I had high expectations for her follow-up novel. I'm happy to say not only was I not disappointed, it was just as good or better than I thought it would be. I must warn you though, long after the book ends, you may find yourself thinking about where you are today and the choices you've made that led you to this point. Some of these choices may have been good ones, and some. . . well, may have you asking for a do-over. All in all, I highly recommend this novel.

Joyanne says

This is the 3rd title I have read by the author Kristina Riggle. This tale is multi-perspective where you hear from each of the main characters: Amy, Anna, Cami and Maeve. Each of the protagonists is at a cross-roads in their lives...Amy is getting married after finally shedding the extra weight she was plagued with during her formative years...Anna is home visiting her mom after a friend is killed in a car accident and her boyfriend

has left her...Cami is back home as well after her gambling addiction led her to steal from her boyfriend and he kicked her out and Maeve the mom of Anna is in the middle of being evicted from her home & business and is receiving mail from her not-so ex-husband.

I was sucked into this novel from the first words of the acknowledgements : "The Life I Imagines as a starry-eyed kid hasn't come to pass, but what I've got is even better..."

Some of my favorite quotes:

p.194 Anna's voice "You just can't save people. You can spread out the safety net, but they have to jump into it."

p. 205 Maeve's voice "Maybe I'll tell him that. He was right after all. I know he was tired of being wrong all the time. Almost as tired as I was of being right. It's no fun being right about everything going to hell."

p. 249 Amy's voice "A whisper doesn't always cut it. Sometimes you need to shout."

p.265 Maeve's voice "I step forward to hug her, and I don't feel her stiffen under my arms like she has so often. She rests her chin briefly on my shoulder, curving down to do so. It's still time-warping, feeling my daughter loom over me, when I used to hold that chubby little hand, reaching up to grasp my pinky finger."

p.315 Anna's Aunt Sally "I don't know nothing about nothing. But I do know that waiting around on someone else is no way to live."

p.320 Cami's voice "We did both keep asking my father about mom's death. We couldn't believe it after so many relatives had assured us our mother was a "fighter" and we just had to keep hoping. We did hope, Trent and me; we even prayed the way my aunt told us. And she died anyway, and we'd been so believing of those grownups, but then they didn't have answers..."

p.321 Cami's voice "I leave them to their own trials and walk out on the summerbaked sidewalk, trying to let the sun burn dry my freshly turned grief"

p. 323 Anna's voice "I've felt this way at work, when I've won a tough battle, but both sides--the people not the lawyers--look drained and white-faced in the aftermath. Victory is not always a pleasure." & "I embrace her and let a couple of unfamiliar tears fall into her hair. I'm too tall with my shoes on. I step out of them so I can be smaller again, more like the child she raised by herself. "Maybe you were the braver one for daring to hope out loud," I tell her."

This is an excellent novel. I enjoyed how the main characters' lives were separate and yet woven together as part of the larger story. The cross roads each woman faced were familiar to me. The mother-daughter relationship between Maeve and Anna resonated with me as I navigate the murky waters of this relationship with my own teenage daughter. Cami's grief over losing her mother also spoke to me. I would recommend this title to anyone who enjoys a good story that isn't just fluff.

Dee says

I Won this book as part of a Goodreads First Reads Giveaway. Review to follow when the book arrives

Amy says

I wanted to like this book. I almost put it down after about 25 pages but thought I would give it the "50 page" chance. I must say that the middle of the book is better than either the beginning or the end. Even so, there were too many things happening in the book that were never fully explained and the ending seemed too rushed (like the author was up against a hard deadline and just tried to wrap things up). A couple fewer characters and about 50 more pages might have made this a better book.

Staci says

I jumped at the chance to read this book when Jen of Devourer of Books offered this one as a Book Club selection. I can't believe that I haven't read *Riggle* before! Especially because she is a Michigan author! I was immediately drawn into the storyline because I'm at that age where you often times sit back in a contemplative mood and wonder "what if" and "is this the life I imagined I would have?" The characters were what I loved about this book. *Riggle* made them human...oh, so human. I saw a little bit of myself in each of the women we're introduced to and that was the connection I needed that allowed me to totally immerse myself in their stories. The other aspect of this book that I heartily enjoyed was that Kristina placed her story in her wonderful state of Michigan. I loved seeing the names of cities that I was familiar with and the way in which she described Haven and the family convenience store really hit home with me. Recommend? Hands down...YES! This is a realistic story about women and how we try so hard to make everything perfect in our lives until we realize that we're just not happy. This is a look at four women's struggles with food, perfection, gambling, and waiting for someone to make them happy.

Hope says

Completion update: I really liked some of the characters in this book and hated others. There was no in-between for me with this one. I wish the storyline had taken a slightly different turn: Cami could have been more developed and her story not as rushed as it ended up being; it felt that there was a layer of depth to Anna that was never explored, hinted at but not explored; Amy was just around but I'm not sure that enough was done with her character; and I was sick of Maeve and simply wanted her out of the story. A few more chapters to delve a little deeper into the eventual resolution would have suited me better than what was given.

About halfway through this one....so far, I find Maeve annoying and I'm puzzled as to how she ended up with such a classic Irish name. And when (if ever) will Anna and Maeve share with each other as mother and daughter? Or is it too late? Cami and Anna seem to have so much in common and such a great friendship in so many ways but such a horrible friendship in other ways. It's a shame because when they could really help

each other, they seem to withdraw and go it alone. And then there's Amy and Frodo. How appropriate is it that her dog bears the name of the soul searcher and good vs evil fighter on an almost impossible quest? Half a book to go...

Pam says

Told from four different women's POVs.

Anna - Lawyer who comes home from Chicago to grieve and heal and figure out whether she wants to go back to the highly competitive law practice

Maeve - Anna's mom. She's been in a holding pattern for twenty years after her husband ran off. Before the book ends, she starts to create a life for herself.

Cami - Anna's friend. She's back in town after she loses so much to online gambling. Copes with her drunk and abusive father and figures out her life by the end of the story.

Amy - Marrying into one of the wealthy town families. She's worked hard to no longer be the fat girl from high school and has become obsessed with thinness. Again, there's hope for her to resolve her issues at the end of the book.

Plot line is thin at times but reads quickly.

Eileen says

I really dislike reading books where I want to smack sense in to the characters. The only redeeming quality is how much I can rip it apart at book club.

Angela Watts says

LOVED the characters!!! They had lived their lives one for the better, to make Dreams come TRUE. Having so much FAITH AND HOPE. AND ITS kinda like the saying "YOU MAKE PLANS, AND GOD LAUGHS.". In the end, it all changed for everyone. Interesting, my favorite character was CAMI. Tough, but full of pain, no one knew about. She's the ONLY one who thought ABOUT others.

Sara Strand says

This story follows the lives of four women, Amy (the previously fat high school girl engaged to one of the son's of a prominent family in town), Anna (the Chicago based high powered lawyer who's come home because she was put on a bereavement leave due to the loss of her mentor only to encounter her first love, who is not-so-happily married with a daughter), Maeve (Anna's mom who runs a run-down liquor store slated for demolition but who is also chasing the ghost of her husband and Anna's father who abandoned them 20 years earlier), and Cami (who's come back home after being dumped from her boyfriend because of

her compulsive gambling habit- and she's forced to live with her alcoholic father). All four women are in the town of Haven and are Cami, Anna, and Amy were previously friends when they were younger.

What I love about this story is that it's real. All four characters have their own storyline and the author jumps from character to character perfectly. You can relate to all four characters without a problem and you are rooting for them. I read this book in two days because I really couldn't put it down.

All of the characters are driven by the sentiment that every decision that you make should push you towards the life that you have always imagined for yourself. It might require a tough decision, it might require that you give up temporary happiness but it ultimately should be worth it in the end.

Will Maeve really meet up with her estranged husband? Will Anna forgive her father for leaving and her mother for pining over him all of these years later? Does Anna rekindle her relationship with Will, her first love, despite him being married? Does Cami ever stand up to her father and learn to overcome her gambling addiction? Will Amy decide to marry her fiance.....or will she leave him and take up with a new found friend, Ed?

I obviously know all of the answers to these questions, but it keeps you intrigued and you are constantly racing to the next chapter to see what is going to happen. I highly recommend this book and I am pretty excited to delve into Ms. Riggles other books. And I'm going to say that I related to each of these characters in different ways and it made me think about those in my life that are very much like these characters a little differently. It's always nice when you can gain a perspective that you otherwise might not have had.

Nely says

Anna is an attorney in Chicago, she's up for partner at her firm, everything is thriving and looking up for her. But when her mentor dies she is forced to take time off from work and heads back to her hometown. Cami has also returned back home. Her and Anna were close friends in high school. She's back to live with her father - who is none-too-thrilled to have her back. She has no other place to go since her boyfriend found out of her gambling addiction and broke off their relationship. Maeve is Anna's mother. She's resided in Haven her whole life running the Nee Nance Convenience Store. Her husband Robert disappeared 20 years ago leaving her to raise Anna on her own. But with her store about to close and Robert's out-of-the-blue correspondence - she'll have to choose between the life she's lived on her own or a possible happily ever after. Amy is about to marry into one of Haven's wealthiest families. She used to be overweight while in high school but (thanks to running every morning) she has lost all that excess weight and now has the perfect body. She has the everything she's ever dreamed of, but will it be enough to keep her happy?

Told in alternating chapters between the four women. Each woman finds herself at a point in their lives where they question themselves and wonder if this is the life they've imagined. They are all happy with the lives they've led and have struggled to reach their goals yet find that although they've reached those goals in life they still are not happy. This is the main thread in *The Life You've Imagined*. I found myself taken in by these four women. Not only does Ms. Riggle create characters that you can easily relate to but I found a little bit of myself in each of them. Their struggles are real - one is searching for perfection, one is dealing with addiction, one is overly conscious about her weight, while one continues to wait for someone else to bring her happiness instead of taking the reins and searching for her own joy.

This story deals with friendship and family and the decisions that we make in life that lead us to wonder

about the life we imagined. A very touching and sweet story.

Lisa says

This book had a great pace and interesting characters. Each chapter is told from the point of view of a different character. Although I got confused as to who was talking sometimes, it did enhance the story.

Diane Secchiaroli says

This book follows the lives of 4 women and the choices they made (and make). The characters were well developed and very interesting. Read the book in one sitting as I was very interested in how the characters developed. Even though there were 4 characters the story flowed right along. Will look forward to reading more of her novels.

Maureen says

A quick and easy read, but not altogether entertaining as there really isn't much to the plot. It is a story told from the points of view of four different characters, yet none of them are fully developed. Their relationships/friendships with each other are not fully explained so it's a little hard to believe that some of the things would really happen (i.e. one of the characters, who isn't really friends with one of the others, asks her to be a bridesmaid, but if the story to that point is to be believed, they don't really have much of a friendship!). There are several other things that happen that don't seem to make sense simply because the author doesn't really give you the back story (like Anna suddenly getting involved with an old boyfriend though it's never mentioned that there was still any sort of spark between them). And the story line that involves Maeve, Anna's mom, just seemed really stupid and far fetched. The ending, I suppose, was mostly disappointing because well, it just seems to end. I gave it two stars because it was a quick and easy read, and could have been so much better if the author spent more time developing her characters and making their story lines a little more plausible.

Laura de Leon says

I'm not sure if this is 3.5 or 4 stars. There was so much about the book that I liked, but the overall book had some issues.

I liked hearing the stories of each of the 4 main characters. I think that four of them was too many, both because none of the stories got the full treatment it deserved, and because that seemed like a few too many crises at the same time.

I never felt I had a grip on the problems that sent Anna home, away from the life she'd always imagined, from the potential partnership she'd been working so hard for.

As she returns home, she meets up with her former best friend, who flees from a crisis in her new life, and

falls into a crisis (that's been building for years) with her father.

Anna's mother has a handful of secrets-- She's losing her home and her business due to new development turning her area upscale; she's having health problems and can't afford her medication; her husband that abandoned the family and has been missing for over 20 years is suddenly back in touch.

And so on-- this web expands to include a network of crises for her aunt, another high school friend, her high school boyfriend, his brother, and more.

Each of these stories is interesting, and is well written as far as it goes. In some cases, the problems are inter-related, and the timing is not coincidence. Others seemed forced, and like the author was trying too hard.

This may be a pet peeve, but I wish that there had been one couple with a happy, stable relationship. Even if they'd been dealing with family issues, financial issues, child issues, friendship issues, body issues (all of these are in the book somewhere), it would have been nice to have one stable marriage.
