

At First Sight

by Stephen J. Cannell



About the Book

In his newest and most distinctive novel, Stephen J. Cannell channels his insider experiences into a tautly drawn noir look at the materialistic Hollywood lifestyle.

Meet Chick Best --- a middle-aged, self-absorbed, disaffected, California dot.com millionaire. Other than his house and high-priced foreign cars, Chick's most expensive possession is his trophy wife, Evelyn. Evelyn is good at spending Chick's money, money that has pretty much run out. Another problem is his drug-addled sixteen-year-old daughter, Melissa. Though concerned about his life and family, Chick has resigned himself to a miserable state of acceptance. That is, until he, Evelyn, and Melissa take a Christmas vacation in Maui. With this, Chick's life changes?

Chick experiences unrequited love at first sight when he observes Paige Ellis emerging from the hotel swimming pool. His obsession, exceeded only by his need to possess her, isn't diminished when he learns that she is happily married. Instead, he befriends Paige and her near-perfect husband, Chandler. A short time later, back from Hawaii, Chick's obsession compels him to drive to Paige's house, where he runs down and kills Chandler in a drugstore parking lot. But this is just the beginning of Chick's nightmare as his life spirals homicidally out of control, resulting in the destruction of everything he holds dear. Will Paige learn the truth about Chick before it's too late?

Fast paced, filled with wry humor, murder, lust, and dead-on L.A. characterizations, Cannell has written his most explosively saleable novel yet.

Discussion Guide

1. When you first started reading this novel, did you think Chick Best would be the hero? Do you feel sympathy for him?
2. How prevalent is Chick Best's materialistic view of life in our society? Do you know people who are like Chick? Is

the U.S. experiencing a cultural decay of values?

3. Have you ever had a crush on someone that lingered a bit too long? Did you act on it? What were the consequences? Good or bad?

4. Do you know any "perfect couples" like Chandler and Paige? Ever feel envious of them? Did you think Chandler and Paige might be hiding a secret?

5. Did you think Chick would get away with running over Chandler and trying to cover it up? Have you ever tried to cover something up?

6. Chick's money seems to almost enslave him, as he can't divorce Evelyn because of the cash outlay. Do you think some people are almost imprisoned because of their money?

7. Do you know any families like Chick, Evelyn and Melissa? Has the dysfunctional family become the norm these days?

8. Chick uses sympathy to manipulate Paige. Have there been people in your life that have tried something like that? How do you draw the line without appearing rude?

9. Paige seems to see little warning signs about Chick, but gives him the benefit of the doubt. How will that experience change her life? Did you ever get a gut instinct about something? Did you follow your instinct or ignore it? What happened?

10. Do you think Paige will ever find as much happiness with a new man, someday, as she did with Chandler?

Author Bio

Stephen J. Cannell (1941-2010) was the author of the bestselling Shane Scully books, including *THE PROSTITUTES' BALL*, *THE PALLBEARERS* and *THREE SHIRT DEAL*. He was also an Emmy Award-winning television writer and producer, and in his 35-year-career, he created or co-created more than forty TV series. Among his hits were "The Rockford Files," "Silk Stalkings," "The A-Team," "21 Jump Street," "Hunter," "Renegade," "Wiseguy" and "The Commish." He received numerous awards, including the Saturn Award - Life Career Award (2004), The Marlow Lifetime Achievement Award from Mystery Writers of America (2005) and the WGA Paddy Chayefsky Laurel Award for Television Writing Achievement (2006). Having overcome severe dyslexia, Cannell was an avid spokesperson on the condition and an advocate for children and adults with learning disabilities. He was a third-generation Californian and resided in the Pasadena area with his wife, Marcia, and their children.

Critical Praise

"Stephen J. Cannell is one of my favorite authors. Read Steve & you'll be hooked!"

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