

# The Big Love

by Sarah Dunn

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## About the Book

A fresh and hilarious debut novel about commitment, competition, and the occasional joys of unencumbered sex, for readers of **Pride and Prejudice** to **The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing**.

Sometimes being left in the lurch is the best thing that can happen to you. Alison Hopkins's live-in boyfriend, Tom, goes out in the middle of a dinner party to buy a jar of mustard, then calls her from a pay phone to tell her he won't be coming home. He's left her for his beautiful ex-girlfriend Kate Pearce, the kind of woman about whom men say rhapsodically, "She's like a drug." Alison had always feared that Tom's looks would land her in trouble --- having a handsome boyfriend is like having a white couch, an invitation to disaster.

But if Tom isn't her Big Love, who is? Alison embraces her freedom, buys "hiking boots and lacy underwear," and sets out on a stroll down the midway of love. From an eye-opening fling with her new boss to an unexpected proposal from an old friend, Alison samples love's many varieties --- all the while talking obsessively with her girlfriends, comparing stories, and working through a lifetime of conflicting beliefs about trust, faith, and commitment. In spite of (or perhaps because of) her neuroses, Alison finds a surprising kind of triumph --- and an irrational faith that the Big Love may be nearer than it appears.

## Discussion Guide

1. Have you ever had a relationship end in a particularly humiliating way? What did you do? Do you understand why Alison decides to take Tom back?
2. Alison says that when asked what her father does, she usually says that he's a dentist. Is there a piece of your own biographical information that you try to hide if at all possible? Why?

3. Alison spends a lot of time feeling guilty and a lot of time trying to reject that guilt. Basically, she's weighing moral pressures against social norms. Is this something that you've struggled with yourself? How do you work out these kinds of conflicts?

4. Have you ever been in a relationship that included a Kate Pearce figure? How did you handle it?

5. Do you consider yourself a religious person? If so, how much does that guide your dating decisions? Do you know people who have Alison-type conflicts because of their religious upbringing?

6. Why do you think it's always women who are portrayed as wanting to settle down, while men are portrayed as happier to remain single? Is this true, in your experience? What about Alison's friend Cordelia --- do you know women who take her approach to relationships?

7. What do you like best about Alison as a character? Do you think you are similar to her in some ways? How or how not?

8. Why do you think the book ends the way it does? What kind of message does Alison's decision send to you as a reader? Have you ever made a similar decision?

## Author Bio

Sarah Dunn is a novelist and television writer whose credits include "Spin City" (for which she co-wrote Michael J. Fox's farewell episode) and the critical darling "Bunheads," which you would have loved. Her debut novel, *THE BIG LOVE*, is available to read in 19 languages. Dunn is also the creator and executive producer of the 2016 ABC series, "American Housewife." She lives outside New York City with her family and their 17 chickens.

## Critical Praise

**The Big Love...**"top-shelf chick lit" that "transcends its genre with 3-D characters and empathy."

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