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Gem & Dixie



Synopsis

“A story that broke my heart and put it back together again. You won’t want to let Gem and Dixie go.” —Sarah Dessen, New York Times bestselling author of *Saint Anything*

From renowned author and National Book Award finalist Sara Zarr comes a deep, nuanced, and gorgeously written story about the complex relationship between two sisters from a broken home. Gem has never known what it is to have security. She’s never known an adult she can truly rely on. But the one constant in her life has been Dixie. Gem grew up taking care of her sister when no one else could: not their mother, whose issues make it hard for her to keep food on the table, and definitely not their father, whose intermittent presence is the only thing worse than his frequent absence. Even as Gem and Dixie have grown apart, they’ve always had each other. When their dad returns home for the first time in years and tries to insert himself back into their lives, Gem finds herself with an unexpected opportunity: three days with Dixie on their own in Seattle and beyond. But this short trip soon becomes something more, as Gem discovers that to save herself, she may have to sever the one bond she’s tried so hard to keep.

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Customer Reviews

“Packed with Zarr’s sharp-eyed, honest observations of human nature, *GEM & DIXIE* gives us two sisters crushed by the failures of their parents, and asks how bad things need to get before you have to make a change. A road-trip like you’ve never been on

before. — (Laura Ruby, author of National Book Award finalist and Michael L. Printz Award winner *BONE GAP*) — “This may be the most powerful sibling story I’ve ever read. Gem and Dixie’s road trip is heartbreaking and honest and beautifully rendered by one of my all-time favorite writers. This is Sara Zarr at her absolute best. — (Matt de la Peña, Newbery Medal winning author of *WE WERE HERE*) — “Gem & Dixie is a beautiful, poignant, and ultimately hopeful story from one of the finest YA authors writing today. An exploration of the complicated love and loyalty between sisters that is at once profoundly moving and unflinchingly real. — (Nova Ren Suma, New York Times bestselling author of *THE WALLS AROUND US*) — “A story that broke my heart and put it back together again. You won’t want to let Gem and Dixie go. — (Sarah Dessen, New York Times bestselling author of *SAINT ANYTHING*) — “With a vivid, well-rounded cast of characters, including the adults, and a poignant portrayal of family dynamics, Zarr’s frank, resonant story is both bittersweet and triumphant. — (Booklist (starred review)) — “Zarr movingly explores the effects of neglect on two vulnerable girls relearning how to trust. Readers’ hearts will ache for Gem, who so desperately wants to follow a different path than her parents, as she tries to carve out a better life for herself and her sister. — (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) — “The forthcoming release from National Book Award finalist Zarr should count as more than one book for teens who’ve not yet read her, because after finishing this one, they’ll surely dig into her back catalog (including the stellar *A Story of a Girl*). — (Brightly.com)

Sara Zarr is the acclaimed author of five novels for young adults, most recently *The Lucy Variations*, and co-author with Tara Altebrando of *Roomies*. She’s a National Book Award finalist and two-time Utah Book Award winner. Her novels have been variously named to annual best books lists of the American Library Association, Kirkus Reviews, Publishers Weekly, School Library Journal, the Guardian, the New York Public Library, and the Los Angeles Public Library and have been translated into many languages. She is a MacDowell Colony Fellow and has served as a judge for the National Book Awards. Sara lives in Salt Lake City with her husband and online at www.sarazarr.com.

I really really adored this book. Gem is stuck in a crap life but she doesn’t just sit around and complain about it- she does something. I loved the sister dynamic between Gem and Dixie and even though I’m more of a romance person, this book didn’t have any romance and it was still a five star read. I’m totally a fan of Sara Zarr now. Going to check out her other books. :)

I literally read this book in one sitting. I could not wait to find out what happened to these characters. Sara Zarr has such a talent for sharing the real feelings and experiences of young adults.

Sara Zarr's trademark insight and beautiful writing. I loved Gem & Dixie's relationship.

(I received an advance copy of this book for free. Thanks to HarperCollins and Edelweiss.)

“Everything that happened. It was only because we wanted our parents to be better, to know how to take care of us. This was a contemporary story about two sisters, and their less-than-perfect home life. Gem was an okay character, and I felt quite sorry for her when she was hungry and had no food to eat and no money to buy food with. I did find her plans a little lacking at times though, and it seemed a little foolish to splash out on doughnuts when she could have made the money last her longer. The storyline in this was about Gem and her sister Dixie, and their life with their mother who wasn't very reliable. We had their father turn up unexpectedly, and try to insert himself back into their lives, and a big bag of cash that he brought with him which we never really got an answer as to where it came from. I expected this book to be more about the relationship between Gem and Dixie though, and they didn't really support each other that much at all. In fact, Dixie was actually quite unpleasant towards Gem at times, and poor Gem got the short end of the stick time and time again. The ending to this was okay, although again it wasn't what I was expecting. I also thought there would be more repercussions about the money as well. 6.5 out of 10

This is the beautiful story of two sisters, living a life neither of them are totally happy with. Gem and Dixie's story is told from Gem's point of view, and Gem only gradually explains her family history. A high schooler, Gem lives at home with her mother and sister. She doesn't get along with her mom, and feels that both her mother and father like her far less than Dixie. Gem has always felt like an outsider, someone who is both far too mature for her peers and yet not cool enough to fit in with them. She doesn't have any friends, wears baggy clothes from a thrift store, and visits the school counselor's office neatly every day. However, her life changes when her father decides to step back into her life, even for only a short time. She has a choice to make, and she chooses to let Dixie in on her secret. Now that Dixie knows as much as she does, the sisters begin to bond and find their way back into each other's hearts. They fight and bicker as sisters do, but along the way they

learn how to trust and appreciate each other. Gem's friendships are an interesting component. At the beginning, she seems to have created this dual relationship with the school counselor, as she seems to rely on him for friendship. She tells him nearly everything, primarily about her family history and daily life. However, as she gets out of the house more, she discovers other people her age who have made their own decisions, creating a unique path through the world for themselves. She admires these other lone wolves, and gradually learns how to have friends again. In the end, this book left me crying, feeling for people like Gem who feel forgotten by society. I'm so glad she was able to step into a lifestyle that worked for her, and so sad for the other people who are never handed that opportunity. I'm grateful for all the people looking out for each other in this world.

Gem remembers a time when her younger sister Dixie used to look up to her, when Gem took care of her. But now Gem is 17 and Dixie is 14, and Dixie is popular and beautiful while Gem is a loner who only speaks with the high school counselor. Their mom fell off the wagon, doesn't provide food for them, and obviously prefers Dixie to Gem (as Gem sees it). So when their father comes back and secretly stashes something in their room, Gem sees this is an opportunity. She convinces Dixie to take a day and night off, but Gem has other plans, too. She doesn't want to go back to the way life is, and even though Dixie still has hope that their parents will take care of them. Fast-paced and heart-wrenching story about sisters who have to make their own choices.

Sara Zarr's latest offering, *Gem & Dixie*, is the story of a girl trying to make up for her parents' failings by taking care of her sister. When an unexpected windfall prompts Gem and Dixie to take a little adventure, will Gem finally realize that her sister is not the only one who needs love and support? Gem & Dixie had such promise, but the book never really materialized into something meaningful. The story felt rushed, especially as it neared the ending, and the character development was almost nonexistent. With the environment in which the sisters were raised being so dysfunctional, it was not that the author had an absence of material with which to work. The ending wrapped up too neatly and the sisterly bond, which was expressed throughout the book, seemed to be forgotten toward the ending. I have been a big fan of Sara Zarr, but *Gem & Dixie* does not come close to measuring up to the previous novels.

I absolutely loved Sara Zarr's novel, *SWEETHEARTS*, and was eager to start this one after hearing

so many good things about it. This book did not disappoint in the slightest. Zarr has crafted a thoughtful and tumultuous novel about sisters, poverty, and making hard choices. It kept me guessing and enthralled, and ended at just the right point.

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