



Little Known Facts: A Novel

By Christine Sneed

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The people who orbit around Renn Ivins, an actor of Harrison Ford-like stature—his girlfriends, his children, his ex-wives, those on the periphery—long to experience the glow of his flame. Anna and Will are Renn's grown children, struggling to be authentic versions of themselves in a world where they are seen as less-important extensions of their father. They are both drawn to and repelled by the man who overshadows every part of them.

Most of us can imagine the perks of celebrity, but *Little Known Facts* offers a clear-eyed story of its effects—the fallout of fame and fortune on family members and others who can neither fully embrace nor ignore the superstar in their midst. With *Little Known Facts*, Christine Sneed emerges as one of the most insightful chroniclers of our celebrity-obsessed age, telling a story of influence and affluence, of forging identity and happiness and a moral compass; the question being, if we could have anything on earth, would we choose correctly?

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Editorial Review

From Booklist

Starred Review In his silvered fifties, Renn Ivins extends his reign as a Hollywood sex symbol, adding screenwriting and directing to his accomplishments. Twice-divorced, he also embarks on a closely observed relationship with his movie's ambitious star, Elise, who is younger than his two children, Will and Anna. Sneed follows her award-winning short story collection, *Portraits of a Few of the People I've Made Cry* (2010), with an ensnaring first novel that delves into the complex challenges and anguish of living with and in the shadow of celebrity. Sneed's wit, curiosity, empathy, and ability to divine the perfect detail propel this psychologically exquisite, superbly realized novel of intriguing, caricature-transcending characters and predicaments. Lost-soul Will knows he "should be happy," but instead he is adrift and angry. A medical student emulating her steadfast pediatrician mother, the novel's moral center, Anna seems immune from the toxins of family notoriety until an untenable love affair exposes her vulnerability. As Sneed illuminates each facet of her percussively choreographed plot via delectably slant disclosures—overheard conversations, snooping, tabloids, confessions under duress, and journal entries, among them—she spotlights "little known facts" about the cost of fame, our erotic obsession with movie-star power, and where joy can be found. --
Donna Seaman

Review

"Reminds us of Jennifer Egan's meta-fiction, Richard Ford's *Americana*, Daniel Kehlmann's preoccupations."
--**GQ, UK edition**

"A beautiful and funny novel about living in the shadows of the movie business." --**Essentials Magazine, UK**

"Christine Sneed's impressive debut novel, *Little Known Facts*, is a Hollywood tale that aspires to complicate the traditional Hollywood narrative. Its characters want to swap sincerity for surface, real anxiety for contrived problems." --**Mark Athitakis, Minneapolis Star Tribune**

March 3, 2013 - **Editor's Choice - New York Times Book Review**

"Little Known Facts" is a supple story of modern love, aging, and what it means to seek happiness, set around the edges of the movie industry. Perhaps surprisingly, given the rarefied location, Sneed brings her book to a realistic and satisfying ending. --**Brooklyn Bugle**, Alexandra Bowie

"Impressive...hypnotic...hard to put down....*Little Known Facts* is juicy enough to appeal to our prurience but smart enough not to make us feel dirty afterward.... Sneed is such a gifted writer... Her depiction of both proximity to celebrity and celebrity itself had me totally convinced." ?**Curtis Sittenfeld, New York Times Book Review (cover)**

"An entertaining, formally inventive read ...the world that Sneed creates in *Little Known Facts*-- a blend of truth and fiction that weaves real life actors and directors into Renn's everyday life -- makes for a clever take and a fun read." ?**Los Angeles Times**

"I grabbed Christine Sneed's novel *Little Known Facts* on my way out the door this weekend and ate it up. It's a great canny read: wry, observant, inventive in style, rich in character. Christine Sneed knows her

Hollywood, but more than that, she knows her people.” ?*Jess Walter, author of Beautiful Ruins and National Book Award finalist for The Zero*

“Sneed possesses uncanny insight into the power dynamics in families, friendships and workplaces. Exquisitely structured, with its spotlight segueing among characters, bits of tabloids, journal entries and overheard conversations, *Little Known Facts* is one of those rare novels that is both profound and fun.” ?*Chicago Tribune, Editor's Choice*

“An ensnaring first novel that delves into the complex challenges and anguish of living with and in the shadow of celebrity. Sneed's wit, curiosity, empathy, and ability to divine the perfect detail propel this psychologically exquisite, superbly realized novel of intriguing, caricature-transcending characters and predicaments...As Sneed illuminates each facet of her percussively choreographed plot via delectably slant disclosures--overheard conversations, snooping, tabloids, confessions under duress, and journal entries, among them--she spotlights 'little known facts' about the cost of fame, our erotic obsession with movie-star power, and where joy can be found.” ?*Booklist (starred review)*

“Sneed is a graceful prose stylist; sentence by sentence *Little Known Facts* is clean, spare and uncluttered.” ?*San Francisco Chronicle*

“The gravitational pull of fame in a celebrity-obsessed culture informs this smart, fresh debut about a family living in the shadow cast by its larger-than-life patriarch.” ?*Bonnie Jo Campbell, National Book Award finalist for American Salvage*

“Sneed inhabits her characters' interior lives with impressive clarity and precision.” ?*Time Out Chicago*

“Goes beyond the tabloid headlines... Sneed effectively blurs the line between fact and fiction and brings each character to life.” ?*Kirkus Reviews*

“Christine Sneed's compelling first novel, *Little Known Facts*, reads with the effortlessness of a page-turner. The story is located at an intersection of romance - make that romances--fame, and physical beauty, and yet Sneed's insight into her credibly drawn characters combined with the novel's multi-faceted construction make the story anything but formulaic, and confer upon its subjects the depth and grace of the author's lucid prose and book's imaginative construction.” ?*Stuart Dybek, author of I Sailed With Magellan*

“Christine Sneed's *Little Known Facts* is a contemporary, culturally vibrant novel brimming with superb dialog, a sharp sense of scene and narrative pace, emotional/psychological clarity, and a bracing humanity. A blazing piece of work.” ?*Floyd Skloot, author of In the Shadow of Memory*

“[An] impressive debut...a Hollywood tale that aspires to complicate the traditional Hollywood narrative.” ?*Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“I tore through this instantly engaging box of literary candy in a weekend and immediately thought: TV series, HBO or AMC-style.” ?*MSN*

“Five years ago, Salman Rushdie was so impressed with fiction writer Christine Sneed that he included her work in 2008's *Best American Short Stories* anthology. But the Evanston resident has kept a low-profile, occasionally producing more short stories in the years since. That's about to change though, with the publication of Sneed's elegant first novel, *Little Known Facts*.” ?*Chicago Magazine*

“Sneed writes with authority and deftness.” ?*New City*

“Well-crafted and character-focused . . . the story's shifting perspectives are expertly intertwined and never heavy-handed . . . *Little Known Facts* tells a story that moves beyond the salacious lives of its characters, illustrating the difficulties and obsessions that are as common within Hollywood as outside of it.” ?Zzyzyva

“If Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad* and Jess Walter's *Beautiful Ruins* had an illicit affair, Christine Sneed's *Little Known Facts* might be the love child.” ?Kirkus Reviews

“I really, really loved *Little Known Facts*. From the point of view of those closest to Hollywood super star Renn Ivins we see that flaws and foibles of the airbrushed lives of the rich and famous and the people closest to them. This is a deeply sensitive novel that takes the reader into a world of usually glamorized or carefully spun by publicists, revealing the havoc wreaked on most of the lives of ex's and offspring and lovers and the stars themselves. This insightful novel avoids moralizing, though in the end the moral might well be 'Be careful what you wish for.'” ?Cathy Langer, *Tattered Cover*

“I thoroughly enjoyed this novel. The writing is fresh, and so honest. And she shows us that everyone, no matter how famous or rich, is human and capable of making mistakes. All we really want in life is to be happy and content but many of us never get there because we are so wrapped up in what we should be doing or what others think of us. Will struggles in the glitzy shadows of his movie star father, only not really sure whether he should go to law school or follow in his father's footsteps, or even in his mother's or sister's. both of whom are successful medical doctors. How can any of these related people have a healthy romantic relationship when their father is on his third wife, the most recent one the age of his daughter Anna? While we all read the tabloids about famous movie stars like Brad and Angie, little do we know that they are all wondering about their role in this world. Christine Sneed brings us into their world, showing us that no matter how famous one may be, all of us are facing the same question. Who are we and what do we want from our life? An insightful read, *Little Known Facts* will make you think, make you laugh and perhaps feel a little sad at how fame and fortune can give a family such wealth, yet also cause so much damage to our intimate lives. Everyone will want to read this novel to catch a glimpse into this world of glitter and fame of Hollywood.” ?Annie Philbrick, Bank Square Books, Mystic, Connecticut (President, New England Independent Booksellers Association)

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From the Author

Little Known Facts is a novel about a family in Hollywood with a successful actor at its center. My primary interests as I wrote the book were the complex relationships between parent and child, brother and sister. *Little Known Facts* isn't a cautionary tale about the price of fame and its effects on a successful actor and those closest to him, but as I wrote the book, I attempted to be clear-eyed and unsentimental about the probable drawbacks experienced by someone with the kind of fame Renn Ivins, the novel's focal character, has achieved.

The idea for the book arrived at some point in 2010, and I'm not sure what triggered it. One day I was thinking, What would it be like to be the son of Harrison Ford? Or Paul Newman? Or George Clooney? It would probably be pretty difficult at times because almost any potential friends or lovers the

son meets, whether they realize it or not, would want to get as close, if not closer, to the father as the son.

Plot is important in this novel, as it is in most novels, literary or genre fiction, but *Little Known Facts* is above all a character-driven story. I am very interested in voice and character, and each of the major characters narrates one or two chapters in this novel. As my editor at Bloomsbury, Nancy Miller, said when we first spoke about the book in September 2011, the novel asks the question: If you could have anything in the world, what would you choose?

Above all, this is the quandary the novel poses for most of its characters. Here is a family with absolutely everything - all of the material goods and more intangible gifts that we are told by our media that we should pursue and seize, no matter what the personal costs.

Money? Yes.

Fame? Yes!

Autonomy? Yes.

Beauty and good health? Yes.

As I wrote, I wondered why the people who have these things are often so miserable. Why do a considerable number of famous people often appear in the tabloids, ones that gleefully trumpet their latest bad decision? And why do they seem so often to trust and/or fall in love with the wrong people? These are the questions that I considered as I wrote *Little Known Facts*. Being a lifelong fan of film, and having followed the career trajectories of many actors and actresses since my childhood, I realized after I wrote the first chapter, "Relations," in the fall of 2010 that I had found my ideal subjects: family, fame, and film.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bessie Morris:

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