



Shopgirl

Steve Martin

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With more than 340,000 copies in print, Steve Martin's *Shopgirl* has landed on bestseller lists nationwide, including: *New York Times*, *Publishers Weekly*, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times*. Filled with the kind of witty, discerning observations that have brought Steve Martin incredible critical success, this story of modern day love and romance is a work of disarming tenderness.

Shopgirl Details

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Author : Steve Martin

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From Reader Review Shogirl for online ebook

Shaindel says

I read this book out of curiosity because I'd always wondered what kind of writer Steve Martin is. (I mean, I'd used his quote "I think I did pretty well, considering all I started out with was a bunch of blank paper" for YEARS in writing classes, at the tops of syllabi, etc. I could at least see what he'd done with that blank paper.)

I was pleasantly surprised. I *really* liked this novella. It was the right size for the story. I think too often writers cram a lot into a short story or stretch out not enough into a novel. I really liked the character of Mirabelle. I liked her struggle to find herself. She was believable. She had real thoughts, real feelings. I was a bit thrown by the Jeremy conversion toward the end of the book, but I don't even understand love and romance in real life, so making it have to be a stretch in a book isn't a huge downfall for me. I am SO glad that Ray Porter remained Ray Porter throughout the novella, decent (sort of) but never fully redeemed. The unforgivable sin in this novella would have been to have him become a prince charming and rescue Mirabelle, or something, a la Pretty Woman. ICK!

It did set up the expectation that some older man out there will pay off the remaining \$58,000 of my student loans, but it hasn't happened yet.

T G says

A haunting tale...in that I am still haunted by Martin's borderline misogynistic caricatures of women (and what he thinks we do in public restrooms (page 101)). He writes like a child who got a thesaurus for Christmas but has never read a great book, or been allowed to use the f-word, or met a woman, owned a pair of testicles (page 18), or employed an editor.

Don't believe me? Check out how he named his main character: Mirabelle Buttersfield. No one is named Mirabelle Buttersfield! Unless the author is trying so hard to reflect (mirror) his own worth (belle).

I once loved Martin's comedy, but this slim volume cured me of that.

Read this book only if you already hate bubble-gum, nipples, women or reading.

Diane says

This book was a surprise to me, loaned for on-the-plane reading after I'd finished the book I'd brought on the trip.

I had low expectations of the writing and the story. Both were pleasant surprises. Written in almost elegant prose, the characters in their small lives unfold. Vignettes of their lives are neat and complete, stacking on top of and inside one another, until the chain of experiences moves each character to a different place. It may seem insignificant or that the characters just drift, but isn't that a lot like life? We may want each moment,

each choice to be significant and important, but it's the everyday journey that has significance and the places it takes us that have significance.

Mirabelle, the shopgirl with a history of depression and small artistic talent whose triumph is getting through each day, is likeable because she doesn't wallow. She wants to be someone to somebody. Ray, the older man who pursues her, disappoints and hurts her and stays part of her life afterward, is lost, generous and clueless. And Jeremy grows up without ever knowing how much of a loser he was.

Kelly says

"Just three months later, it happens to Ray...a 45-year-old woman ...touches his heart and then breaks it flat. It is then Ray's turn to experience Mirabelle's despair, to see its walls and colors. Only then does he realize what he has done to Mirabelle, how wanting a square inch of her and nor all of her has damaged them both."

That's about the best quote I can pick to illustrate what this novel is like. This falls under those quietly heartbreaking pieces that I like. It's not amazing or groundbreaking, but it is good. It's quick, a pretty easy read and well written, and who knew Steve Martin was this touching /and/ intelligent?

Lissa says

I picked up Shopgirl at the Strand for \$4.95. I had heard of it vaguely as the movie with Steven Martin in it as an adaptation of the book Steve Martin wrote. I purchased it as a book that I could take with me on vacation and have it be ultimately disposable. Sometimes this trick backfires on me as I end up really liking a book and toting it home with me regardless of my original intentions. This is not one of those times.

Shopgirl tells the story of depressed, artist Mirabelle who works behind the glove counter at Neimann Marcus. She has few friends, doesn't do much with her art, and is basically wafting through life trying not to get mired in depression. Enter Ray Porter (the Steve Martin character), a 50 year old man also drifting through life, searching for the perfect woman by running through all of the imperfect ones as fast as he can. The two embark on a relationship which predictably ends badly, but also predictably teaches both of them something about themselves and allows them to grow as people and friends.

I didn't have super high hopes for this book at the outset, having seen another example of Steve Martin's writing in the play Picasso at the Lapin Agile (a play which starts in a very promising manner and ends with an Elvis impersonator beaming down into a small French café in Monmartre. Really.) Surprisingly, this book is relatively well written and even contains some witty insights on relationships between people. Here are two examples of such passages:

... Jeremy does have one outstanding quality. He likes her. And this quality in a person makes them infinitely interesting to the person who is being liked. (p8)

"I am traveling too much right now," he says. In this sentence, he serves notice that he would like to come into town, sleep with her, and leave. Mirabelle believe that he is expressing frustration at having to leave town and that he is trying to cut down on traveling. ... So now they have had the Conversation. What neither of them understands is that these conversations are meaningless. They are meaningless to the sayer and they meaningless to the hearer. The sayer believes they are heard and the hearer believe that they are never said. (p64-65)

That being said, I couldn't get past the fact that this book is essentially chick lit. It might be semi-good chick lit (if that isn't an oxymoron), and it may have been written by a man, but it's chick-lit nevertheless. It has all of the hallmarks of chick-lit with a little bit of Paulo Coelho style self-discovery – no wonder it was a NYT best seller. I can't recommend it without reservation, but if you want a short book for a quick plane/train ride, it would certainly do the job.

Shannon says

Edit: Goodreads just showed me the following quote from Steve Martin: "Some people have a way with words, and other people...oh, uh, not have way." Heh. I'm gonna go ahead and add that to my review here. Also, I am totes against GIFs/pics in goodreads reviews usually (because USE YOUR WORDS) but I will make an exception (b/c RuPaul and Visage):

OH, what an utterly FASCINATING look into the totally important and equally fascinating stereotypes regarding heterosexual sexual relationships. Everyone in this book could have died in a fire, and I wouldn't have cared. The girl, I hate her. I refuse to believe this girl is smart, everything she does indicates that she is a complete idiot. But the reader is supposed to accept that she is smart because Steve Martin cleverly includes this in the narration by saying something like "She is smart. She reads books". WOW, NEAT. AND SUBTLE! Plus everyone in this book is really shallow and vapid and obsessed with clothes, which I think is contradictory to the claim of any of these people being intelligent at all. Am I saying that people really interested in fashion can't be intelligent? YES, PRETTY MUCH. The narration is ridiculous. BOO.

Also: this book is about a 50 year old rich white guy fucking a young hot 28 year old. And they made a movie out of it and of course, STEVE MARTIN played the 50 yr old. YOUR PLOY IS TRANSPARENT, MARTIN. I haven't seen the movie, but I actually kind of want to. If this story could ever work, I could see it working as a movie. NOT AS A BOOK, Martin isn't a good enough writer to pull it off.

Bark says

I read and really enjoyed Martin's *The Pleasure of my Company* a few years ago. It was quirky and sweet and I found it very funny in parts. I was hoping for more of the same with *Shopgirl* when I stumbled across this unabridged audio but for some reason it's not working for me.

At all.

I'm finding myself bored and annoyed. It's about a 28 year old woman who works in a shop selling "gloves no one wants to buy" and lives like a newly graduated college student. She's lonely and shy and wants to meet a man she'll fall head over heels for. Instead she dates Jeremy, a slacker who doesn't seem to ring any of her bells, and now there's a 50ish divorced millionaire entering the picture. Ugh. On both counts.

I'm not finding this charming or quirky or even slightly interesting and may give it up very soon. Instead I'm finding it all rather shallow and too focused on clothes and expensive meals and endless, unfunny descriptions of things I just don't give two craps about. The characterization is incredibly flat. Steve Martin's reading of the words is very disappointing. I guess over the past few years of steadily reading professionally narrator works I've been spoiled. Martin reads the words but adds no life to them. All of the characters have the same voice. The whole tone of the book so far been rather dreary when I was hoping for a laugh.

Whoops, looks like I just talked myself into another DNF.

Lynx says

I was in absolute awe while reading this at Steve Martins beautifully written prose and at how well he captured not one but two extremely different types of women. I cannot recommend this novella enough. Excuse me while I go search for his other books...

Nikki says

The story wants to be deep. It wants to paint a delicate picture of the world and wow you with its simple truths. It wants to sing straight into your heart, but it doesn't realize that it's tone deaf and, well, stupid. The only thing you can really do is pat it on the head and say, "Poor thing," and then maybe give it a piece of pie because its life will be filled with nothing but disappointment.

Laura says

Steve Martin, how I love you.

But please, please, please don't write anything ever again.

Kisses,
Laura

PS: Please stop being in movies involving the words "dozen" or "bride" in the title. K thanx.

PPS: Also, if you specifically note on one page that your character does not have a couch, only a FUTON OH MY GOD HOW CLICHED IS THAT, as a really lazy way of saying she "isn't grown up yet," and then later say that a visitor to the character's apartment never saw her cat as it HID UNDER THE COUCH, seriously, you should never ever write anything ever again. This is objective proof, it isn't just me, okay?

Amber says

Mirabelle works as a Glove clerk at the Neiman's department store in the mall in L.A. . While she is fighting off depression and questioning her self-worth, two men pursue and lust after her: a slacker named Jeremy and a rich playboy millionaire named Mr. Ray Porter. Can Mirabelle find out who loves her before she gets hurt? Read on and find out for yourself.

This was the first ever book that I have read by comedian/actor Steve Martin. It was a funny and sad read. One of the parts that made me laugh out loud was (view spoiler). If you like Steve martin, definitely check out this novella book. It is available at your local library and wherever books are sold.

Jason Koivu says

Welcome to Steve Martin's gallery of portraits!

The subject is the vacuous LA social scene.

First up and the focal point of the show: **Mirabelle Buttersfield**

Miss Buttersfield is a wallflower coming into her own. She works at a high-end clothing store. Her thoughts on romance and relationships are juvenile.

Next we have a brief study on **Jeremy**.

He begins as a slacker and evolves into a more successful bit of trite pomposity. His thoughts on romance and relationships are juvenile.

The next subject is a catalyst for change within the arch of Martin's intended scope for this show: **Ray Porter**

Ray is too wealthy for his own good. It leaves him with too much time on his hands. His thoughts on romance and relationships are juvenile.

Aside from the above, a number of minor works fill out the show.

Critics have lambasted Martin's portraits as non-representative of the true human experience. Those people probably haven't met a Los Angeles socialite, a being who believes that who you know, who you fuck and who you wear is of paramount importance. Some have attacked Martin himself, as if laying blame on him for his subjects' vapid thoughts and actions. This is unfair.

For this reviewer, the portraits themselves are not the problem, it's the overall story that this collection presents that makes the work as a body fall apart. Or perhaps it would be more poignant to say that it falls on its face. As a whole it fails to "move". They are, after all, portraits. They do not move, not themselves nor the viewer.

Connie says

Mirabelle works at a boring job in the dressy glove department at Neiman Marcus, selling a product that few people stop to buy. The shy artistic woman longs for more in her life, and needs to feel loved. But the dating scene in LA is superficial and cutthroat, and she often makes unwise choices. It's hard to believe she is twenty-eight years old since she acts much younger. The novella is bittersweet and darkly humorous as Mirabelle looks for genuine love and happiness.

Jessica says

Ack. In his zeal, perhaps, to convince the world that he's a serious author, Steve Martin writes a really, really terrible book. Kindly, one might call it spare, modern, zen-like; honestly, one might call it artificial, pretentious, and boring as hell. It's a coming of age novella about one emotionally crippled shopgirl named Mirabelle and her dalliances with a flake named Jeremy and a pompous older guy with the personality of a paper plate, named Ray Porter. Poor, artistic, dumb glove-selling Mirabelle wants someone to love her. Really, she wants her dad to love her, but he obviously doesn't, because he had an affair for seven years with the neighbor. Oh, and he's a Vietnam vet with an old pal mysteriously looking for him. Wait, what? Exactly, my friends.

Honestly, this read like a writing assignment gone wrong: there are bubble gum nipples that can be chewed, a lavender scented snatch...and that's just one minor character (whose entire presence is totally unnecessary, by the way). I mean, at one point, he said the main guy in the book was unknowingly searching for women's "quanta." WTF?

If you love Steve Martin at all, promise me that you won't read this book. Because you'll never look at him the same way again.

Flora says

Bored, I checked this out of the library one day, and I have to say, I found it surprisingly affecting. It's easy to sneer at Steve Martin for being a lit-pretender, but this wasn't a pretentious book in the least. It's a melancholy (not depressive), wise, and well-drawn portrait of a young woman in a sad, tender, no-strings-attached relationship with a wealthy older man who cares for her, but does not love her, and while this may sound banal, there's something extraordinary about this ability of this quiet little book to inhabit both of these characters -- especially the young woman -- so empathetically.

Honestly, I'd give it four stars except for the distracting make-'em-laugh satiric sketches of L.A., which come off as more apologetic than funny ("oh, all right, I'll throw them a bone..."). The book's rough edges -- occasional awkward prose here, a clunky transition there -- actually endear it to me all the more. Its lack of cynicism feels more risky than a hell of a lot of "approved" literary fiction, and all the more commendable for its disinterest in compensating with cheap sentiment. Its "depth" may be modest, but it's earned.

Antigone says

One imagines, easily, that Steve Martin has done some hard time in fine department stores. Perhaps he was with Bernadette Peters or Victoria Tennant, or any of the many beautiful women he's been known to escort around town; afternoon strolls that clearly included revolving doors and escalators, a hint of rich perfume in the air, the light refrain of piped-in piano, and a rack of Armani couture that called to his lady with its siren song. He has been parked, one imagines, several times in one of those lush, over-stuffed chairs reserved for lotharios in his predicament - abandoned with a purse and a coat and a promise this will only take a minute. Though it doesn't take a minute, it never takes a minute, unless it is the proverbial "dog" minute which will prove to be the hefty chunk of an hour.

It isn't long before his eye wanders away from the dressing room door, past the jackets and hats, the

mannequins, the tipsy stack of angora sweaters, and off to another department altogether where a lone, lithesome salesgirl stands before a case of evening gloves. And he wonders, one imagines, whether women still wear evening gloves. He cannot remember the last soiree he attended that included such. Oh, but her day must prove tediously uneventful! What sort of girl employs herself thus?

And just as we are doing now, Steve Martin had begun to imagine. He imagined this girl, her day, her life, her slacker boyfriend. He imagined a possible customer; an older man entranced. He imagined a rival, he imagined a lust, he imagined assorted neuroses. And he imagined all of this in winsome ways with elegant internal prose. And it is a story, I suppose, yet it is the story of an author who is diverting himself while in wait for something else. Take up this book and you will wait with him. You will wait through his idle rumination, biding your hours alongside a man who is anticipating the return of a beautiful woman. A woman he will swiftly be forsaking you for.

And who can blame him? She's miles beyond anything he's been able to construct in his afternoon's imagination.

Theresa Abney says

"She knows that she needs new friends but introductions are hard to come by when your natural state is shyness." p.4

"However, Jeremy does have one outstanding quality. He likes her. And this quality in a person makes them infinitely interesting to the person being liked." p.8

"She is offering herself to him on the outside chance that he will hold her afterward. She feels very practical about this and vows not to feel bad if things don't work out. After all, she tells herself, she isn't really involved with him emotionally or otherwise." p.14

"It never occurs to Mirabelle to observe herself, and thus she is spared the image of a shy girl sitting alone in a bar on Saturday night. A girl who is willing to give every ounce of herself to someone, who could never betray her lover, who never suspects maliciousness of anyone, and whose sexuality sleeps in her, waiting to be stirred." p.20

"She keeps working to make connections, but the pile of near misses is starting to overwhelm her." p.21

"Mirabelle is not affected by a man's failure to approach her, as her own self-deprecating attitude never allows the idea that he would in the first place." p.27

"I'm not sure what I like; I'm still forming."

Jesse says

Steve Martin is surprisingly adept at prose. A master of the comedic genre, Mr. Martin manages without pretentiousness to imbue the story of a slightly imbalanced shopgirl, Mirabelle, a veritable everyday girl with little to do of anything, with a mirth and understanding that undercuts all of his celebrity and stand-up.

Mirabelle meets both a fledgling creature Jeremy and a middle-aged millionaire Ray Porter. The short novella explores with a flat, unflinching, and sometimes almost dull eye the capture of a woman coming to terms with her sexuality and further her reality. Here, she explores the world of love with an idea that one day she will truly be artistic, and there, Jeremy explores the world of the subconscious with an idea he will learn how to love, and finally, at the end, Ray Porter explores the world of the sexual to find the deviant connection between sex and deeper emotion.

The plot is predictable, certainly. There is this consistent and melancholy touch of the everyday in this everyday book about everyday people, and that is precisely what made Shopgirl so memorable for me... that everyday people, perhaps like myself, or like you, standing at retail counters... even they have stories, and they are worthy, if not less-than-flashy.

Evan says

The eponymous 28-year-old shopgirl of this book, Mirabelle, works in the stultifyingly dull job of selling gloves at Neiman's in Beverly Hills and yearns for love but isn't sure how to go about it, accepting what she can get, including the affections a well-to-do 50-year-old traveling businessman. Even though he should know better, he wants to play both ends against the middle; hurt on all sides is inevitable. There's plenty of arrested development to go around; the 50-year-old knows as little about love and true romance as the 28-year-old. In this book, everyone is learning, and by the end, everyone does learn a lesson, and moves on.

I thought the book was charming. The characters might strike many as thinly defined ciphers; literary constructs more than flesh-and-blood characters. But as the narrative proceeded I didn't find this to be a weakness, because Martin's contemplations on desire and romantic need and the difficulty of satiating those in a difficult world I found wise. Martin writes from within a milieu he knows, creating characters that reflect stages of his own life, as a struggling artist and as a success. The world of Beverly Hills phoniness comes in for a wry drubbing.

So, despite this book's limitations, it spoke to me. Sue me.

Don says

This is a strange little novella and in my opinion kind of wonderful. This is not a comedy, not a novelization of Roxanne or anything like that but rather a more serious take on two lovers, one older, one younger. The story is told in three acts, but little else in this book -- not the characters, not the way events unfold -- feels Hollywoodized.

Martin's narratological approach is refreshing, more Victorian than contemporary. The narrator continually intrudes into the story, explaining each character's unconscious motivations and desires. Done the wrong way, this approach can be grating and impede the story's flow, but it works here. Perhaps it's because the narrator seems like some kindly older man, someone who has gained humility from his own mistakes and loves and cheers for his own flawed creations.
