



All My Puny Sorrows

By Miriam Toews

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A *New York Times* 2015 Holiday Gift Guide selection.

Elf and Yoli are sisters. While on the surface Elfrieda's is an enviable life (she's a world-renowned pianist, glamorous, wealthy, and happily married) and Yolandi's a mess (she's divorced and broke, with two teenagers growing up too quickly), they are fiercely close—raised in a Mennonite household and sharing the hardship of Elf's desire to end her own life. After Elf's latest attempt, Yoli must quickly determine how to keep her family from falling apart, how to keep her own heart from breaking, and what it means to love someone who wants to die.

All My Puny Sorrows is the latest novel from Miriam Toews, one of Canada's most beloved authors not only because her work is rich with deep human feeling and compassion, but because her observations are knife-sharp and her books wickedly funny. And this is Toews at her finest: a story that is as much comedy as it is tragedy, a goodbye grin from the friend who taught you how to live.

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All My Puny Sorrows By Miriam Toews Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

A *New York Times* 2015 Holiday Gift Guide selection.

A *New York Times* Editors' Choice selection.

A *Slate* Book Review Favorite Books of the Year selection.

A *Boston Globe* 'Best Fiction of 2014' Pick

One of *Ms. Magazine's* Great Reads for Fall 2014

"Irresistible... its intelligence, its honesty and, above all, its compassion provide a kind of existential balm—a comfort not unlike the sort you might find by opening a bottle of wine and having a long conversation with (yes, really) a true friend."

—Curtis Sittenfeld, *The New York Times Book Review*

"In the crucible of [Miriam Toews'] genius, tears and laughter are ground into some magical elixir that seems like the essence of life." —Ron Charles, *The Washington Post*

"[A] wrenchingly honest, darkly funny novel. (Grade: A)" —*Entertainment Weekly*

"Bold, brash and big-hearted.... Toews writes from the point of view of Yoli, whose interior monologue reads like a cross between David Foster Wallace and Robin Williams if both were, in fact, a 40-something Mennonite woman with authority issues. She's a smart aleck with heart, a philosopher with a comic's timing." —*The Dallas Morning News*

"Sisters should always want what is best for each other, but what if what one sister really wants is to end her life? This is the dilemma Yoli faces when her ethereal sister, Elf, attempts suicide. The beautiful Elf is a world-renowned pianist who's in a loving relationship and about to start an international tour, but having it all doesn't matter to her when she is drowning in despair. Yoli, as she rightfully points out, is the one struggling; she's twice divorced, with children by two different fathers, and after having achieved some success as a YA series author (though she has nothing like Elf's gifts), her career has stalled. But though she and Elf are close—the bond they forged while growing up in a conservative Mennonite town in Canada is central to the narrative—depression is hard to understand from the outside. VERDICT Despite the topic, this is not a dark novel. In fact, its gloom comes in the form of dark humor, and Toews (Irma Voth) does a wonderful job with her characters, none of whom are perfect, which makes them all the more real. It requires a talented author to take a serious subject and write such an engaging, enjoyable work.—*Library Journal* (starred)

"Touching and unexpectedly humorous." —*Marie Claire*

"Heartbreaking." —*Bustle*

"[A] sad, wise, often funny and very good novel." —*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

"All My Puny Sorrows' is a bittersweet story about those who survive and those who can't fight the current."
—*Minneapolis StarTribune*

"[A] triumph in its depiction of the love the sisters share."—*Publishers Weekly* (Starred Review)

"[A] masterful, original investigation into love, loss and survival." —*Kirkus* (Starred Review)

"All My Puny Sorrows by Miriam Toews: The premise of Toews's sixth novel, released to critical acclaim in Canada earlier this year, is simple and devastating: there are two adult sisters, and one of them wants to die. She's a wildly successful and in-demand concert pianist, but she longs for self-annihilation. It's a premise that could easily be grindingly unbearable, but Toews is a writer of considerable subtlety and grace, with a gift for bringing flashes of lightness, even humor, to the darkest of tales. (Emily)"—*The Millions*

"Toews writes with a sharp and piercing eye, offering characters and descriptions which are so odd and yet so spot-on that the reader has to laugh, albeit reluctantly." —*Booklist*

"A touching tribute and a captivating novel." —*BUST*

"[Miriam Toews] has a wry, funny voice that is the readers' steady companion. She also has an eye for the absurd and a perfect tragicomic timing in delivery." —*Christian Century*

"Toews is an extraordinarily gifted writer, with unsentimental compassion for her people and an honest understanding of their past, the tectonic shifts of their present and variables of their future." —*The Globe and Mail*

"Funny and irresistibly warm" —*BuzzFeed*

"Toews infuses [All My Puny Sorrows] with humor and sympathy."
—John Williams, NY1, The Book Reader

"A harrowing and often very funny novel ... Every page yields a surprise, a laugh, or a line that will make your breath catch in your throat." —Dan Kois, *Slate*

"As jagged and ripped open as a freshly torn heart." —*The Boston Globe*

About the Author

Miriam Toews is the author of five previous novels: *Summer of My Amazing Luck*, *A Boy of Good Breeding*, *A Complicated Kindness*, *The Flying Troutmans*, and *Irma Voth*, and one work of nonfiction, *Swing Low: A Life*. She lives in Toronto.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alberto Meyer:

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