



The Pleasure of My Company: A Novel

By Steve Martin

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The Pleasure of My Company: A Novel By Steve Martin

From the bestselling author of *Shopgirl* comes the tender story of a troubled man who finds love, and life, in the most unexpected place.

Daniel resides in his Santa Monica apartment, living much of his life as a bystander: He watches from his window as the world goes by, and his only relationships seem to be with people who barely know he exists. He passes the time idly filling out contest applications, counting ceiling tiles, and estimating the wattage of light bulbs.

It is through Daniel's growing attachment to Clarissa, and to Teddy, that he finally gains the courage to begin to engage the world outside, and in doing so, he discovers love, and life, in the most surprising places.

Filled with his trademark humor, tenderness, and out and out hilarious wordplay, *The Pleasure of My Company* is a tour de force sure to delight all of Steve Martin's fans.

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The Pleasure of My Company: A Novel By Steve Martin Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Readers expecting something zany, something crudely humorous from Steve Martin's second novel, *The Pleasure of My Company*, will discover much greater riches. While the book has a sense of humor, Martin moves everywhere with a gentler, lighter touch in this elegant little fiction that verges on the profound and poetic.

Daniel Pecan Cambridge is the narrator and central consciousness of the novel (actually a novella). Daniel, an ex-Hewlett-Packard communiqué encoder, is a savant whose closely proscribed world is bounded on every side by neuroses and obsessions. He cannot cross the street except at driveways symmetrically opposed to each, and he cannot sleep unless the wattage of the active light bulbs in his apartment sums to 1,125. Daniel's starved social life is punctuated by twice-weekly visits from a young therapist in training, Clarissa; by his prescription pick-ups from a Rite Aid pharmacist, Zandy; and by his "casual" meetings with the bleach-blond real estate agent, Elizabeth, who is struggling to sell apartments across the street. But Daniel's dysfunctional routines are shattered one day when he becomes entangled in the chaos of Clarissa's life as a single mother. Taking care of Clarissa's tiny son, Teddy, Daniel begins to emerge from the safety of logic, magic squares, and obsessive counting.

Martin's craftsmanship is remarkable. The tightly packed novella paints rich portraits with restraint and balance, including nothing extraneous to Daniel's world. The book does not try for pyrotechnics but is contented with a Zen-like simplicity in both prose and plot. Avoiding the crushing bleakness of much contemporary fiction, Martin insists through Daniel--a man haunted by horrors of his own making--that there is possibility for compassion, that broken lives can actually be healed. --*Patrick O'Kelley*

From Publishers Weekly

Martin's first novella, *Shopgirl* (2000), was a revelation, a compassionate yet cool, meticulously crafted tale of a young woman's affair with an older, successful man not what most readers were expecting from the famed comic actor and author of *Pure Drivel*. Martin's second novella continues the enjoyment, offering another story with a conscience, one funnier than *Shopgirl* but put together just as smartly, if very differently. Martin forgoes the distanced omniscient narration of *Shopgirl* by plunking readers into the head of one the odder yet more charming protagonists in recent fiction, Daniel Pecan Cambridge, a gentle soul suffering from a mild mix of autism and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Daniel, 33, lives in a rundown Santa Monica apartment, his life constricted by an armor of defensive habit (all the lightbulbs in his apartment must equal 1,125 watts; he can't step over curbs so can cross streets only where two opposing driveways align, etc.), his dull days punctuated only by imagined romances and visits by his student social worker, lovely and kind Clarissa. Daniel's ways (a product of child abuse, Martin shows with subtlety) are challenged when Clarissa and her infant son, Teddy, move in to escape an abusive husband; when Daniel wins a contest as "Most Average American" and must give a speech to claim the \$5,000 prize; and when his beloved grandmother dies, sending him on a road trip of discovery back home. This novella is a delight, embodying a satisfying story arc, a jeweler's eye for detail, intelligent pacing and a clean, sturdy prose style. What's most remarkable about it, though, is its tenderness, a complex mix of wit, poignancy and Martin's clear, great affection for his characters. Many readers are going to love this brief, big-hearted book.

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From Booklist

Martin's first novel, *Shopgirl* (2000), was charming and clever, and his second is even more accomplished.

Daniel Pecan Cambridge (his middle name is taken from his grandmother's successful pecan farm in Texas) is at odds with the world. He can only cross the street at driveways that are directly opposite each other, he must have an exact amount of light wattage in his apartment at all times, and he longingly watches a beautiful pharmacy clerk and a sexy realtor from afar. A psychiatry student named Clarissa visits him twice a week, trying to get to the root of his many phobias and quirks, but he holds her at a distance because she tells him nothing about her personal life. He knows she's somehow connected to the little boy and the woman he sees outside his apartment during their sessions. It turns out the little boy is Clarissa's son, Teddy, and one day, when Clarissa's ex-husband tries to take Teddy from her, Daniel literally throws himself over the boy and suddenly finds himself drawn into their lives. Daniel grows increasingly attached to them and realizes that his phobias might have to take a backseat to the people in his life. Martin's trademark humor is guaranteed to have readers laughing hard, but there is also a great deal of sweetness here and a real affection for his characters. *Kristine Huntley*

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Users Review

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