



## The Perfect Neighbors: A Novel

By Sarah Pekkanen

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**The Perfect Neighbors: A Novel** By Sarah Pekkanen

**One of *Glamour's* Best Books of Summer \* An *Us Weekly* Trending Title**

**“A delicious beach read.” –*People***

**“Relatable characters round out a fun, fast read.” –*Good Housekeeping***

**“A compelling, suspenseful tale.” –*Kirkus Reviews***

**“The perfect summer read.” –*Booklist***

How well do you ever really know the family next door?

Bucolic Newport Cove, where spontaneous block parties occur on balmy nights and all of the streets are named for flowers, is proud of its distinction of being named one the top twenty safest neighborhoods in the US. It's also one of the most secret-filled.

Kellie Scott has just returned to work after a decade of being a stay-at-home mom. She's adjusting to high heels, scrambling to cook dinner for her family after a day at the office—and soaking in the dangerous attention of a very handsome, very married male colleague. Kellie's neighbor Susan Barrett begins every day with fresh resolutions: she won't eat any carbs, she'll go to bed at a reasonable hour, and she'll stop stalking her ex-husband and his new girlfriend. Gigi Kennedy seems to have it all together—except her teenage daughter has turned into a hostile stranger and her husband is running for Congress, which means her old skeletons are in danger of being brought into the light.

Then a new family moves to this quiet, tree-lined cul-de-sac. Tessa Campbell seems friendly enough to the other mothers, if a bit reserved. Then the neighbors notice that no one is ever invited to Tessa's house. And soon, it becomes clear that Tessa is hiding the biggest secret of all.

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## **The Perfect Neighbors: A Novel** By Sarah Pekkanen Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

Review

#### **Praise for *The Perfect Neighbors*:**

"Pekkanen deftly intertwines four stories into a tapestry depicting the frayed seams underlying small-town American domesticity. A mistress of women's fiction, Pekkanen transforms clichéd suburban troubles—from adolescent drama to infidelity—into a compelling, suspenseful tale." (*Kirkus Reviews*)

"A gossipy page-turner." (*Glamour*)

"Pekkanen uncovers the hopes, heartbreaks, and indiscretions that lurk behind a community's carefully maintained façade in this engrossing novel reminiscent of Liane Moriarty's suburban-set mysteries. Women's fiction star Pekkanen's latest novel will be energetically promoted as the perfect summer read." (*Booklist*)

#### **Praise for *Things You Won't Say*:**

"Gripping reading" (*People*)

"A standout among standouts." (*Glamour*)

"A gripping story of racial profiling, PTSD, and the threads that hold people together. You'll forget it's fiction." (*Marie Claire*)

"Fantastic and realistic." (*Examiner.com*)

"Pekkanen tackles a timely topic." (*Booklist*)

"Pekkanen reliably builds strong, interesting characters." (*Kirkus Reviews*)

#### **Praise for Sarah Pekkanen:**

"Sarah Pekkanen writes with wit and warmth and a deep understanding of the way women—mothers, daughters, sisters, friends—make a place for themselves in the world." (Jennifer Weiner #1 *New York Times* bestselling author)

"Ultimately, Pekkanen shows that relationships of any kind take work, expression of love, and the willingness to take risks in order to save them." (*New York Journal of Books*)

"Smart and soulful, Pekkanen explores the place where self and sisterhood intersect." (*Redbook*)

"Pekkanen's wry voice and engaging characters keeps things fresh." (*People*)

"Pekkanen offers a conversational writing style and a knack for making readers care about her characters." (*Washington Post*)

"Sarah Pekkanen is one of my favorite authors of women's fiction." (Lisa Scottoline *New York Times* bestselling author)

“Internationally best-selling Pekkanen writes novels that offer thoughtful examinations of how the past shapes adult relationships and the differences between men and women.” (*Booklist*)

#### About the Author

Sarah Pekkanen is the internationally bestselling author of *The Opposite of Me*, *Skipping a Beat*, *These Girls*, *The Best of Us*, *Catching Air*, and *Things You Won't Say*. Her work has been published in *People*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA TODAY*, among other publications. She lives with her family in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

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The Perfect Neighbors

#### Chapter One

Four Weeks Later

Newport Cove Listserv Digest

\*Drivers Beware!

A friendly reminder that school starts today, so please be on the lookout for our students, especially the wee ones, and remember to come to a full and complete stop at every stop sign. Remember—A Normal Speed Meets Every Need! —Sincerely, Shannon Dockser, Newport Cove Manager

\*Dog Poop

Would the owner of the VERY LARGE DOG (judging from the size of its leavings) please be considerate enough to clean up after your pet so that I don't step in a disgusting mess when I'm in my own yard? Canine fecal matter not only contains parasites, it attracts rodents. Please treat your neighbors' yards with the same respect you would accord your own. —Joy Reiserman, Daisy Way

\*Honda Mechanic?

Can anyone recommend a good mechanic for a Honda minivan? —Lev Grainger, Crabtree Lane

• • •

“Hurry up, sweetie! You don't want to be late for the bus on the first day!” Susan Barrett called up the stairs.

She grabbed the leash hanging on a hook in the coat closet and her shaggy gray mutt, Sparky, who had supersonic hearing when it came to the rattle of a leash or the creak of the oven door opening, came running, his nails scrabbling against the wooden floors.

Susan ran through a quick mental checklist: Cole's new Spider-Man lunchbox was packed inside his matching Spider-Man backpack. A sheaf of three-ring paper filled his binder. His water bottle had been rinsed and filled.

She checked her watch. Sparky looked hopefully up the stairs. And Cole finally came racing down, his face clean but his shirt on backward.

Susan expertly flipped it around and they stepped outside into the golden September air. Later it would grow very warm, but right now the weather was mild and clear. This was the best part of Susan's morning, the few minutes she and Cole spent ambling to the bus stop, calling out hello to neighbors while Sparky greeted his canine pals. At the beginning of a fresh day, it was easy to make resolutions: She wouldn't eat carbs. She'd go to bed at a decent hour. She'd stop stalking her ex-husband, Randall, and his awful girlfriend.

A dozen yards ahead was her best friend, Kellie, shepherding along her daughter, Mia, and her son, Noah, who was conveniently Cole's best pal. As Susan drew closer, she heard Kellie saying, "Just try two bites of a granola bar. Two little bites! I'll pay you a dollar . . ."

"How come I don't get paid for eating?" Cole asked Susan.

"Oh God, pretend you didn't hear that," Kellie said to Susan.

"Mrs. Scott, you said 'God,' " Cole informed her.

"I beg your pardon," Kellie said, winking, as Susan shrugged. Who knew where Cole had picked up that chiding tone? Maybe from Randall's girlfriend; when in doubt, Susan found it convenient to assign her blame.

As Cole ran ahead to catch up with Noah, Kellie moved over to let Susan walk alongside her. But Kellie nearly stumbled as a sidewalk crack snagged one of her shoes.

"How long does it take to get used to walking in high heels when you've been in flip-flops for a decade?" she asked.

"Two weeks," Susan said instantly. She and Kellie had an ongoing game in which they delivered bogus answers with complete authority. It had started when one of the kids—Susan couldn't remember which one—had asked where Santa went on summer vacation. "Australia," Susan had said, at the exact moment Kellie had responded, "Bermuda."

"You made that up. It's already been five weeks. Now tell me the truth, is this outfit okay?" Kellie asked. "Does it say I'm trustworthy yet savvy, the sort of woman you need to buy a house from? Mia, honey, don't pick that flower. It's part of Mrs. Henderson's garden."

"Mom, I would never pick someone else's flower. That would be illegal," Mia huffed. Ten-year-old Mia had a dozen Girl Scout badges and was certified by the Red Cross as a mother's helper, facts she didn't so much tell people as accost them with.

"You look great," Susan told Kellie honestly. She could see hints of the high school cheerleader Kellie had been in her heart-shaped face and thick blond hair. Kellie had been in the popular crowd, Susan knew, but she was one of the nice girls: the kind of teenager who'd ridden on a homecoming float, flashing a dimpled smile to the crowd, and whose yearbook pages were filled with notes from friends. Susan had had a very different experience in high school. She'd been one of only nine black students in her graduating class, and she'd spent most of her Friday nights with a book for company. ("You were class valedictorian, weren't you?" Kellie had asked after Susan had slaughtered everyone in Scrabble on game night. "No!" Susan had protested, honestly. She'd been salutatorian.)

"Oh my gosh! Look!" Kellie said.

She grabbed Susan's arm and pointed across the street, to the empty house with the SOLD! sign staked in the front lawn. Ever since Mrs. Brannon had died of cancer and her husband had moved into an assisted living facility, the Cape Cod had seemed lonely. Sure, the lawn was kept trimmed and the gutters were cleaned. But missing were all the little touches that had made it a home. Mr. Brannon's polished walking stick was absent from its usual spot by the front door, and the flowerpots that had once held Mrs. Brannon's begonias had been removed from the steps. The well-used wooden rocking chairs had disappeared from the porch. Now, though, the house was thrumming with activity, awakening again.

A silver minivan was parked in the driveway and a huge moving van laid claim to the curb, its back doors flung open. Three men were wrestling a couch down a ramp. The house's windows were open, and a soccer ball lay in the front yard.

"I saw that couch in Crate and Barrel a while ago, but it was three thousand bucks, which guarantees Cole would spill grape juice on it the first day," Susan said. "Didn't you say they have a couple of kids? What are they doing with a three-thousand-dollar couch? In cream, no less?"

"Maybe they like to live dangerously," Kellie said. "And look, they're at the bus stop already. Tessa!"

Kellie gave a little jump as she waved, nearly turning her ankle as she landed.

"Did I say two weeks? I meant two months," Susan said.

Tessa, who'd been standing at the bus stop flanked by her daughter and son, a little apart from the other families gathered there, was waving back. A tentative smile broke across her face. Tessa looked nervous, Susan thought. It was tough moving to a new town.

"You're here!" Kellie said when they reached Tessa.

"We are," agreed Tessa. She was a woman composed of edges, the sort a child might draw, Susan thought, taking in her blunt-cut hair, her sharp chin, and her straight, dark eyebrows. Tessa was enviably slender in her khakis and simple blue blouse. Susan made a mental note: No carbs or sugar today!

"We got into town this weekend," Tessa was saying. "We've been staying at the Marriott but we'll be in the house tonight since the furniture just arrived."

"I'm Susan Barrett. Welcome to the neighborhood," Susan said, offering her hand. "How old are your kids?"

"Bree is nine," Tessa said, touching her daughter's head. "And Addison just turned seven."

Both kids had that scrubbed, first-day-of-school look. New clothes with the creases still showing, combed hair, clean backpacks. Except Addison was trying to hide a fat, wiggling worm in his pocket. That detail alone made her sure that he and Cole would become fast friends.

"Great names," Kellie said. "And Addison's the same age as Noah and Cole! Who's his teacher?"

"Um . . . Miss Klopson, I think?" Tessa said.

"That's who Noah and Cole have!" Susan said.



“That’s wonderful,” Tessa said. But her smile seemed to require an effort. Her expression, like her voice, was flat—almost restrained. Was she sick? Or maybe she was just wiped out from the move, Susan thought.

There was a little awkward pause, then Mia tugged on Kellie’s arm. “Can I interview them?” she asked.

“Oh,” Kellie said to Tessa. “Sorry, Mia writes the ‘Kids’ Corner’ column for our neighborhood newsletter. Would you mind if she asked you a few quick questions?”

“Um . . . sure?” Tessa said. She tucked her hair behind her ears and frowned. Mia was already digging into her backpack for her official reporter’s steno notebook and pen.

Mia cleared her throat and uncapped her pen. “First question,” she said. Some of the other parents and kids turned at the sound of her voice ringing out. “WHY did you move here?”

Tessa staggered back, as if she’d been pushed.

“What?” she whispered.

Kellie stepped forward, steadying Tessa by her arm. “Are you okay?” she asked. “You look like you’re about to faint.”

“I’m fine,” Tessa said. “I didn’t—I didn’t eat any breakfast.”

“Here,” Kellie said. She dug in her purse and came up with the granola bar she’d been unsuccessfully pushing on her kids. “Try this.”

“Is she going to get paid for eating it?” Cole wanted to know.

“Shh,” Susan said. She grabbed Cole’s water bottle from his backpack and offered it to Tessa. He could drink from the fountains for a day.

Tessa took a small sip. “That’s better. I was just dizzy for a moment, but it passed.”

“I need to ask my ‘w’ questions,” Mia insisted. “Who, what, where, why, and when.”

“Mia, quiet,” Kellie said.

Tessa didn’t look better, Susan thought. She was still ashen. It was a good thing Kellie hadn’t let go of her arm.

Susan was about to suggest that Tessa sit down when a little boy shouted, “Bus! Bus!”

Parents exploded into activity, kissing children, retying loose shoelaces, shouting reminders about piano lessons and soccer practice, and waving as the kids climbed aboard. Susan touched her index finger to the corner of her eye, then her heart, then pointed it at Cole. I. Love. You. She saw his smile through the bus window, then the vehicle lumbered away, belching a cloud of exhaust. The group of parents echoed the noise with an equally loud sigh of relief. They peeled away, heading to the blissful quiet of their offices or homes.

“Are you up to walking?” Kellie asked Tessa. “We can wait here with you if you’re still shaky.”

“No, really, I’m much better now,” Tessa said. “I should get back and check on the movers.”

“Well, we’re heading in the same direction, so we’ll give you all the neighborhood gossip on the way,” Kellie said. “You wouldn’t believe the scandals. The intrigue!”

Susan punched Kellie in the arm. “She’s kidding. We’re actually quite boring.”

“Sadly, it’s true,” Kellie said. “Well, we do have our ladies-only Wine and Whine night, and that tends to inspire some unexpected confessions, but other than that we’re a pretty tame bunch.”

“You’ll have to join us at the next one,” Susan said. “It’s Gigi’s turn to host, and she’s your next-door neighbor.”

“Have you met her yet?” Kellie asked. “She’s the one with the Susan Sarandon vibe? Picture Thelma just before she and Louise drove off that cliff. Gigi’s husband, Joe, is running for Congress in the special election—our congressman resigned because of a sex scandal with a prostitute, you might’ve heard—and Joe’s always busy campaigning so you probably won’t see him much, but Gigi’s really great.”

Tessa gave them a faint smile. “Well,” she said, “here’s my house.” She handed the superhero water bottle back to Susan. “Thank you again.”

Susan watched as Tessa walked up the front steps and disappeared inside.

“I repulsed her, didn’t I?” Kellie asked. “I always babble too much.”

“No, you’re charming,” Susan said. “I bet she’s getting the flu.”

“So what did you think of her?” Kellie asked as they resumed strolling.

“A spotless beige couch with two kids?” Susan said. “It screams ‘control freak,’ but I’m reserving judgment.”

“She seems . . . pleasant, I guess,” Kellie said. “But shy. She was like that when I met her at the open house, too.”

Susan shrugged. “Busy day today?” she asked.

“Sadly, no,” Kellie sighed. “I don’t have a single listing yet. I earned a little something for helping with the Brannons’ house, but I wasn’t the main agent on it. I’ve been working for a solid month and I’ve barely recouped the costs I spent to get licensed and for my business cards.”

“You’re just starting out,” Susan said. “It’ll take time.”

“I guess,” Kellie said. “How long did it take you? I mean before your business really exploded?”

“Oh, a little while,” Susan said vaguely. She didn’t want to tell her friend that her company, Your Other Daughter, had been an instant success. Susan’s idea for a part-time job coordinating services for the elderly, like taking them to doctors’ appointments or visiting them in nursing homes, had somehow grown into a booming franchise in four states. Early on, there had been an article about her in Black Enterprise magazine,

and then a write-up in the Duke alumni magazine, which had helped launch her company. Now she had a syndicated weekly radio show in which she dispensed advice about elder care to callers. She gave speeches at five hundred dollars a pop. Even Mr. Brannon had become one of her clients; she'd helped the widower sort through his accumulated decades of belongings and choose an assisted living center. She visited Mr. Brannon every week to make sure he was comfortable. That service was off the books; Mr. Brannon, with his courtly manners and sad smile, had a special place in her heart. He seemed so alone in the world.

"I'll spread rumors about asbestos at Wine and Whine night, to get the neighbors we don't like to move away, and then I can sell their houses," Kellie said.

"Great idea," Susan said. "I'll bring a few bottles of Chardonnay. Last time Gigi ran out."

"Maybe she didn't think it would be good for her husband's congressional campaign to have a dozen drunk women lurching out of his house," Kellie mused.

"Oh, come on, it never hurt Bill Clinton," Susan said. "How's this for a plan: we'll get Tessa drunk and she'll spill all her deep, dark secrets."

"I'm in," Kellie said, laughing.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Jonah Masten:**

The book *The Perfect Neighbors: A Novel* can give more knowledge and also the precise product information about everything you want. So just why must we leave the good thing like a book *The Perfect Neighbors: A Novel*? Wide variety you have a different opinion about publication. But one aim in which book can give many facts for us. It is absolutely correct. Right now, try to closer along with your book. Knowledge or details that you take for that, you are able to give for each other; it is possible to share all of these. Book *The Perfect Neighbors: A Novel* has simple shape but the truth is know: it has great and big function for you. You can appearance the enormous world by open and read a guide. So it is very wonderful.

#### **Jodi Dauphin:**

Hey guys, do you desires to finds a new book to see? May be the book with the concept *The Perfect Neighbors: A Novel* suitable to you? The book was written by renowned writer in this era. The actual book untitled *The Perfect Neighbors: A Novel* is the main one of several books that everyone read now. This book was inspired lots of people in the world. When you read this book you will enter the new shape that you ever know ahead of. The author explained their idea in the simple way, thus all of people can easily to be aware of the core of this publication. This book will give you a great deal of information about this world now. So you can see the represented of the world in this particular book.

#### **Thomas Krieg:**

Spent a free time for you to be fun activity to accomplish! A lot of people spent their sparetime with their

family, or their very own friends. Usually they undertaking activity like watching television, planning to beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your own personal free time/ holiday? May be reading a book may be option to fill your no cost time/ holiday. The first thing that you will ask may be what kinds of reserve that you should read. If you want to try look for book, may be the book untitled The Perfect Neighbors: A Novel can be excellent book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

### **Tyler Woodley:**

Guide is one of source of expertise. We can add our know-how from it. Not only for students and also native or citizen require book to know the update information of year to be able to year. As we know those books have many advantages. Beside we add our knowledge, also can bring us to around the world. Through the book The Perfect Neighbors: A Novel we can get more advantage. Don't you to be creative people? To be creative person must love to read a book. Just simply choose the best book that ideal with your aim. Don't always be doubt to change your life with that book The Perfect Neighbors: A Novel. You can more desirable than now.

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