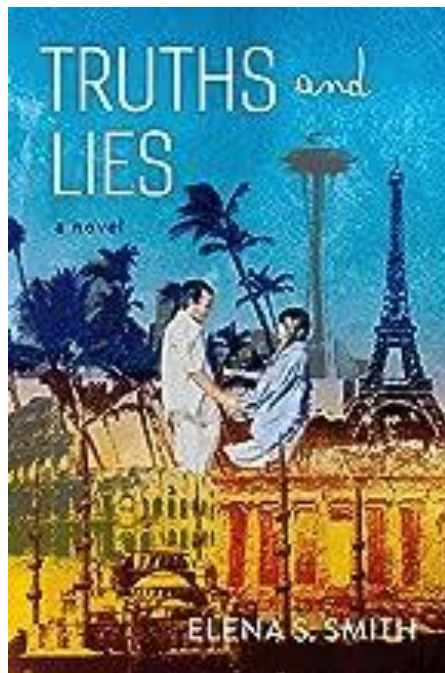


Truth and Lies



By Elena S. Smith

Reviewed by Emma Megan for Readers' Favorite

Truths and Lies by Elena S. Smith is an absolutely enthralling read. Vicki is a university professor and considers herself a lucky lady. She thought her life was over when she got divorced, but now she is happy and enjoys her freedom, independence, and a life free of lies and manipulation. But her best friend, Darlene, is not convinced and decides to make Vicki a profile on a dating site. When Vicki sees the guy she splashed with beer at a Seahawks game a while ago, she decides to give him a chance. Tom is a lonely guy in his late 50s. He has been divorced for almost a decade and stopped taking care of himself. Tom believes he is a decent man who doesn't deserve to be manipulated and deceived. He is afraid of getting hurt again, but after

a brief encounter with a woman at a football game, he starts to believe that it is still possible to find a soulmate.

I did not expect such a fascinating and uplifting contemporary romance novel. *Truths and Lies* by Elena S. Smith is the perfect combination of fun, adventure, peace, love, tenderness, care, and intimacy. It's about truths and lies, freedom and commitment, trust, loss, and survival. Elena writes so well that she draws you into her characters' lives. Her characters are realistic and wonderfully flawed. Their fears and experiences with truth and lies allowed me to connect deeply and relate to them. Vicki is now one of my favorite female characters. I highly recommend this moving novel to all readers looking for a mature romance with strong characters.

Reviewed by Mikel Stevenson

Elena masterfully develops a real-life narrative addressing core issues of both life and self. While reading the story, I came to realize she has identified the most important issue — relationship. That life is about relationship, and what is life without relationship? And much of one's character and personal issues are revealed in relationships. Without saying it, Elena shows there is far more to the internal than we perceive from observing the external.

The story has a *realness* to it in expressing the universal human condition. That life has paradox; life has risk; life has potential; we are vulnerable when we love; life has loss, pain, betrayal; fear of being hurt again is universal. They are powerful forces in my psyche. Yet, life is doable for it is formed by our response to what happens to us.

“Is the truth a bitch?” Elena's question is for the reader to answer. Tom, a main character in the book, grappled with truth as truth seemed to frustrate his desires and actions. “I hate this poisonous phrase ‘the truth is’; it always spoils

everything” (p. 29). But whether a bitch or not, he finally realized lies are worse: “Yes, maybe some truths will hurt, but lies eventually always hurt more” (p. 43). How and why did Tom come to this conclusion? How did he make this truth a reality in his life? Intriguing, indeed. And all can relate to Tom and the process.

Vikki, the other main character in the book, finally voices to herself the age-old question, “Why is life so unfair?” (p. 156). Elena does not answer the why, but Tom and Vikki show us *the how* to live with it. This includes the courage that is often overlooked, i.e., the courage within the human spirit . . . courage to face reality and accept truth; courage to risk being hurt again; courage to engage the unknown. Elena presents it well.

The rather surprising ending is, like the whole story, real life. Poignant, yes, while comforting and inspiring. An engaging read because I see myself with my thinking, emotions and behaviors living in same circumstance, same experiences, with same issues as Tom and Vikki.

Truths and Lies offers the truth that awareness of shared humanness can cultivate virtues of empathy and compassion.



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