

It's You

Dee Dee Welch

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In the romance novel It's You, a man's obsessions direct his unconventional relationship.

In Dee Dee Welch's romance novel *It's You*, a woman is caught in a beguiling but domineering relationship.

Chiffon flees Atlanta after Josh, with whom she's had an affair, reveals that he's married and has a son. She gets a job at an advertising firm in Chicago, where she's determined to begin again. Her plans are thwarted when Josh reemerges as one of the firm's partners. He demands that he and Chiffon move in together, while an extended flashback recounts the couple's earlier confrontation. Then, the novel circles back to cover how Chiffon and Josh learn to navigate the complications created by his initial lie.

Josh's possessiveness is apparent early on. He goes to extremes to keep track of Chiffon. She names his behaviors as stalking, but also excuses his actions as a genuine manifestation of his love. Even her best friend approves. The story becomes alarming as its characters continue to gloss over warning signs of Josh's abusive behavior, rendering Chiffon a vulnerable apologist in a fraught situation. Josh's feelings are portrayed as noble, albeit intense, but it's unconvincing; and Chiffon's accommodations of Josh make the story increasingly less compelling.

The book's underdeveloped characters converse at length, emphasizing their roles: Josh is a wealthy charmer who treats his wife as a problem who's easily taken care of; he steers conversations toward himself and insists that his needs be met. Meanwhile, because her own father was an adulterer, Chiffon is apprehensive about relationships—concerns that are raised at intermittent points. How her relationship with Josh began is under explored; in the present, their bond is fueled by their graphic sexual encounters. Indeed, they tackle most quandaries through physicality, leaving deeper issues unresolved.

The book's repeated descriptions of Josh's eye color and "super model good looks" are a distraction. Meanwhile, little is revealed about the reasons for his dependence on Chiffon, who is described in facile terms like "special." She comes across as an elusive, sometimes confused woman. Other cast members, including Josh's wife, are developed only as outlines. When his wife's mental health deteriorates over the prospect of their divorce, dramatic violence ensues, but its fallout is resolved with unlikely speed. In the same way, hints of danger—like a coworker's observations, which make Chiffon question her relationship—are fast dispatched, or result in too-sudden, unresolved revelations. Jealousies, minor setbacks, and an inevitable wedding round the story out, if at a languorous pace. Punctuation errors and mixed homophones impede the text further.

In the troubling romance novel *It's You*, a man's obsessions direct his unconventional relationship.

KAREN RIGBY (August 11, 2021)

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