



The First Time

By Joy Fielding

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Now in available in trade paperback from *New York Times* bestselling and award-winning author Joy Fielding—an exquisitely moving story of a marriage at a crossroads, and an estranged husband and wife’s discovery of what love really means.

After sixteen years of marriage, Mattie Hart discovers that her husband, Jake—a high-profile Chicago attorney—is involved in yet another love affair. But a far greater crisis descends upon the Hart family after Jake leaves home: Mattie receives devastating news that will alter their lives. Wracked by guilt, Jake returns to the wife he has never really loved and the teenage daughter who wants nothing to do with him. Here, in these most unexpected of circumstances, Joy Fielding deftly ushers her characters through a poignant drama about love’s astonishing power to heal the deepest wounds.

In this dazzling novel, Joy Fielding expands the scope of her storytelling as never before. *The First Time* is "a human drama that celebrates life and love. . .a marvelous story that will leave you cheering, even as you examine your own life and priorities" (*Romantic Times*).

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The First Time By Joy Fielding Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Terminal illness becomes a catalyst for change in this generally affecting if sometimes maudlin drama by the bestselling author of *Missing Pieces* and *See Jane Run*. At 36, art dealer Mattie Hart seems to be enjoying a perfect life. Her husband, Jake, is a brilliant criminal defense lawyer; her teenage daughter, Kim, is lovely and affectionate; and the Harts have a gorgeous home in the Chicago suburbs. But ever since their hasty marriage 16 years ago Mattie got pregnant on their first date Jake has been chafing at the bit, sleeping around and neglecting his wife. Until now, Mattie has managed to ignore his infidelities. But his most recent affair, with freelance writer Honey Novak, is more serious, and Jake plots to leave Mattie just as she plans to confront him. Matters come to crisis when Mattie is found to have debilitating Lou Gehrig's disease, with the prognosis of only a short time to live. Jake is guilt-ridden; though he has already moved out, he returns home to care for Mattie, meanwhile continuing his liaison with Honey. The complicated emotional situation hurts Kim, who is already struggling with the onset of maturity and the pressures of social popularity. Fielding is good at chronicling the messy tangle of family relationships, delving into Jake's childhood memories of abuse and Mattie's recollections of marital neglect. As the end approaches for Mattie, all three are forced to examine what love really means. None too subtle, the novel nevertheless wins points for honesty and forthrightness, tackling complex issues and gearing readers up for a three-tissue finale. Regional author tour. (Sept.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Mattie Hart has spent the past 16 years destroying the evidence of an unfaithful husband: she has brushed aside countless scraps of scribbled phone numbers, thrown away hotel receipts she finds in her husband's coat pockets, and ripped up love notes. Finally, with the recent discovery of yet another indiscretion, she realizes that shredding physical evidence has done nothing to prevent her emotional fraying. Yet before Mattie can confront Jake, a high-profile defense lawyer, and come to grips with the fact that he has never loved her, he moves out of their beautiful suburban Chicago home and into his latest young paramour's apartment. And then Mattie receives some devastating news from her doctor: she has Lou Gehrig's disease. Struggling with a guilty conscience, Jake moves back home to care for his wife and repair relations with their angry teenage daughter, Kim. After a bout of furious denial, Mattie finds herself in the compromising position of depending upon a man whom she has never fully trusted. She also must convince Kim that her previously absent father will be there for her in the future. This is rich stuff. While skimping on plot, Fielding has created an adept study of three flawed characters who, after years of playing head games, must learn how to communicate. Despite such heavy psychological drama, the tone lightens as together these three vanquish inner demons. In the end, even as the novel races toward tragedy, Mattie prevails. Fielding has again pushed a seemingly fragile heroine to the brink, only to have her fight back, tooth and nail. This time, though, death is not the greatest threat. *Kristin Klobardanz*

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From Kirkus Reviews

Fielding forgoes the criminal emphasis of her recent soccer-mom thrillers (*Missing Pieces*, 1997, etc.) to focus on the greatest noncriminal peril of all: an early death sentence. It hasn't all been roses for Mattie Hart. She's never felt close to her mother or the husband who married her because she was pregnant. Now that Jake Hart is making a name in Chicago law circles, the problems continue. He can't stop chasing skirts, and his daughter Kim wants even less to do with him than most 15-year-olds. It all seems to come to a head when Jake announces that he's moving in with his latest lover, novelist Honey Novak. But Jake's desertion is only a

warm-up for a far more momentous ordeal: the news that Mattie's been falling down, laughing uncontrollably, and feeling her foot go to sleep recently because she's in the early stages of ALS, the disease that struck down Lou Gehrig in his prime. What can Mattie do with the year (or, if she's lucky, two or three) she has left? Fielding acutely traces her early alternation of impulsive self-indulgence (going on a shopping spree, buying a sports car she soon won't be able to drive, arranging a fling of her own) and dull despair (the most routine tasks take longer, the simplest decisions become monstrously complicated). Along with the annoyingly banal problems she'd have to cope with even if she weren't dying, Mattie now feels a new urgency in her attempts to understand her estranged husband, whose childhood had been even more traumatic than hers. Predictably but magically, the challenge of Mattie's physical degeneration rekindles her love of life and laughter and her errant spouse. It's only in the final stages of the illness, when Mattie's state seems to require some deeper insight, that Fielding comes up short. For the most part, though, a tonic account of how one woman discovers her truest self in the face of supreme disaster. -- Copyright © 2000 Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Cathy Spearman:

In this 21st one hundred year, people become competitive in every way. By being competitive now, people have to do something to make these survive, being in the middle of typically the crowded place and notice simply by surrounding. One thing that at times many people have underestimated that for a while is reading. That's why, by reading a book your ability to survive increase then having chance to stay than other is high. For you personally who want to start reading some sort of book, we give you this The First Time book as beginning and daily reading e-book. Why, because this book is usually more than just a book.

Joe Bell:

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Martin Solomon:

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