



Margi Conklin  
with her husband  
Chris and their  
dog Mabel in  
New York

## ‘WE HAD A BOOK INSTEAD OF A BABY’

She didn't want to be a mother, but he wanted to be an author, so Margi Conklin took on the traditional breadwinner role while her husband chased his dream. As her honest account reveals, it wasn't always easy

*Photographs Circe*

It's a busy weekday in April when my office phone rings. It's my husband, Chris. 'Hi honey, what's up?' His voice is full of emotion. It breaks when he replies. 'I have some news.' My chest tightens. 'What is it?' I ask, cautiously. When he tells me, I scream. My colleague, Mary, rushes into my office. She says, 'Did someone have a baby?' 'No,' I answer, with the biggest grin on my face. 'It's even better than that.'

I met Chris when we were both 26. I was an American living in London, working as a features editor at a weekly magazine. He was the puzzle editor at the same publication. He used to tease me with silly emails and we soon started to take our flirtation offline, meeting in pubs to talk about our lives and favourite books. Chris was honest and impulsive about his feelings. One day, he told me - unprovoked and without embarrassment - that I was beautiful.

At the time, I was dating a future CEO who stood to make millions in his family business. Chris was an Oxford graduate, who'd gone on to train as a barrister before realising his dream

was to be a writer. Frankly, his desire to be a novelist was partly what attracted me to him in the first place. It seemed a lot more romantic than dating a CEO - I love the English language, and writing a book seemed a noble pursuit.

Eventually, I moved on to another magazine and parted (mutually) from my boyfriend, and Chris and I started dating. One night, on the way home from the pub, I told him I loved him, but I didn't want children. I thought he should know before things got serious. He looked shocked, then chuckled. 'Whatever you want,' he said. 'I just want to be with you.'

We moved in together soon after and, three years into our relationship, Chris said he wanted to quit full-time work to write his novel. 'Do it,' I told him. I made enough money to support us both. In the way that some couples get ready for a baby, we made plans to have a book.

Chris quit and started spending his mornings hunched over his Mac. I'd work a full day, come home and find dinner ready, made by Chris, an excellent cook. Our friends sometimes >>