



Love Is a Canoe: A Novel

Ben Schrank

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Peter Herman is something of a folk hero. *Marriage Is a Canoe*, his legendary, decades-old book on love and relationships, has won the hearts of hopeful romantics and desperate cynics alike. He and his beloved wife lived a relatively peaceful life in upstate New York. But now it's 2010, and Peter's wife has just died. Completely lost, he passes the time with a woman he admires but doesn't love-and he begins to look back through the pages of his book and question homilies such as:

A good marriage is a canoe-it needs care and isn't meant to hold too much-no more than two adults and a few kids.

It's advice he has famously doled out for decades. But what is it worth?

Then Peter receives a call from Stella Petrovic, an ambitious young editor who wants to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of *Marriage Is a Canoe* with a contest for struggling couples. The prize? An afternoon with Peter and a chance to save their relationship.

The contest ensnares its creator in the largely opaque politics of her publishing house while it introduces the reader to couples in various states of distress, including a shy thirtysomething Brooklynite and her charismatic and entrepreneurial husband, who may just be a bit too charismatic for the good of their marriage. There's the middle-aged publisher whose imposing manner has managed to impose loneliness on her for longer than she cares to admit. And then there is Peter, who must discover what he *meant* when he wrote *Marriage Is a Canoe* if he is going to help the contest's winners and find a way to love again.

In *Love Is a Canoe*, Ben Schrank delivers a smart, funny, romantic, and hugely satisfying novel about the fragility of marriage and the difficulty of repairing the damage when well-intentioned people forget how to be good to each other.

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