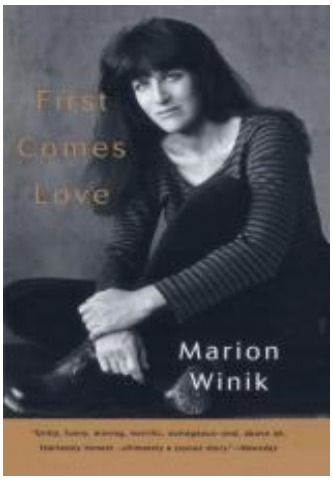
First Comes Love

by Marion Winik



About the Book

In **First Comes Love**, her dramatic, unsentimental memoir, Marion Winik gives an eloquent account of her very unconventional marriage. Her husband, Tony Heubach, was gay, but Marion and Tony were sure that their love and devotion would make their marriage work. With unflinching honesty Winik traces the trajectory of that marriage, from the happy times with their two small sons, to the stresses and fears after Tony was diagnosed with AIDS, to Tony's increasing dependence on drugs, and the rage and violence that those drugs unleashed. Finally, one heartbreaking day, Marion realizes she must at last let go and help her husband die. **First Comes Love** is Winik's way of coming to terms with her life: an impassioned, often harrowing document of love, loss, and survival.

Discussion Guide

1. Marion Winik has chosen a quotation from Giacomo Casanova to begin her narrative. How does this quotation apply to her life, and to Tony's?

2. Why do you think Marion was so strongly attracted to Tony, knowing as she did from the first that he was gay? How can you explain their mutual need for one another? How does Marion explain it? Do you find her explanation convincing?

3. "Miz Rain say value. Values determine how we live much as money do. I say Miz Rain stupid there. All I can think she don't know to have NOTHIN'"[p. 66]. Which opinion do you agree with, or is there something to be said for both? What answer, if any, does the novel offer?

4. Leaving New Orleans after meeting Tony, Marion says, "Lines from love poems by Frank O'Hara and Allen Ginsberg were in my head, and that's who I wanted to be--that passionate outlaw poet with his beautiful taboo love" [p. 32]. Is Marion a romantic? Does her self-perception change during the course of the memoir? Does she still see her life as

romance at the end?

5. Tony decides to take Marion's last name, and Marion says, "I. . .loved what it said about us. I was the man of the family. Tony was mine" [p. 95]. What does she mean by saying she's the "man of the family?" What sexual stereotypes do Marion and Tony transgress? What role does each one play within the family?

6. "Nobody but us thought trying to have a baby was such a good idea" [p. 99]. Do you think it was a good idea?

7. How can you explain Tony's violence toward Marion: is it because his own father abused his mother? Because of drugs or instability? Because of insoluble elements in their relationship?

8. "I was determined to stay with him no matter what. That was my commitment" [p. 183]. Do you think that Marion was right to stay with Tony as long as she did? Was his presence, his violence, and his dependence on drugs harmful to the children? What might you have done in her position?

9. After Tony and Marion argue over the possibility of the lethal injection, Marion weeps, saying to herself, "He does not wish me well. He does not wish me well" [p. 243]. Later, she says, "Tony always said that he loved me unconditionally. I believe that he did" [pp. 254-55]. Can both of these statements be true? If not, which is true and which is false?

Author Bio

Marion Winik can be heard regularly as a commentator on National Public Radio's **All Things Considered**. Her essays have appeared in **Parenting**, **Redbook**, **Glamour**, **Cosmopolitan**, the **Los Angeles Times**, the **Philadelphia Inquirer**, **Texas Monthly**, and the **Utne Reader**, among other publications. The author of **Telling**, she lives in Austin, Texas, with her two sons.

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