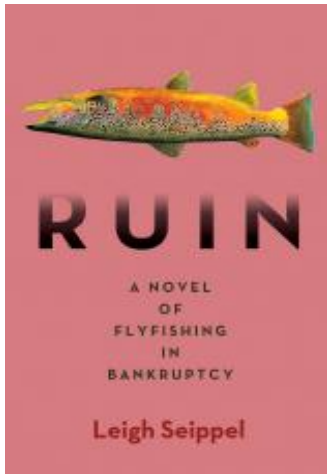


Ruin: A Novel of Flyfishing in Bankruptcy

by Leigh Seippel



About the Book

This vivid story opens with every couple's nightmare --- the disappearance of their comfortable known world. RUIN's adventure explores the unpredictable progression of character and chance for Francy and Frank Campbell, newly destitute in their early 30s, along with their lovers and foes. And a murder investigator.

Frank is another dreamer whose life is suddenly burned to the ground. More a disillusioned literature Ph.D. than an experienced financier, he had naively agreed to join his wife's inheritance with his own personal guarantee of a college friend's private equity partnership debt.

-The business implosion and subsequent bankruptcy took all their assets. Francy, an orphaned European heiress, now finds herself homeless, still married to pleasant, witty Frank --- who had failed to protect them from disaster.

-The couple flees Manhattan to live at a desolate non-working Hudson Valley farm. Frank starts an artisanal brewery with a charismatic new eccentric friend. And, central to the heart of the story, he takes up fly fishing. A local doctor, perceiving Frank's depression, prescribes that he gain some confidence through self-taught fishing.

Frank's perceptions on the water are fresh and acute, sometimes colored by his memory of the words of famous writers, now painfully ironic in his life's new context. - The novel weaves together fly fishing and life experiences that ultimately turn shockingly deadly.

And throughout, there is Francy's story. Now in exile, she re-approaches painting with new and darkly complex emotional energy. Painting in reclusive concentration, she cuts Frank off, tacitly becoming her own woman. Her work's enigmatic intensity attracts a wealthy neighbor who offers Francy a show in his Manhattan gallery and that attracts a great deal of trouble indeed.

Discussion Guide

1. What would you do and where would you go if you lost all your money? Could you start over again? Would you want to remake your life completely?
2. Does Frank's loss overwhelm his ability to see clearly who he is, and does he really understand Francy and what she needs?
3. What do you think is the main theme of the book? How does fly fishing come through? Is it as a metaphor, and if so, a metaphor for what?
4. How does the geographic setting of the book underpin the story?
5. How does the title make you feel about the characters and their development? Would you have given the book a different title or subtitle?
6. Which of the main characters meant the most to you? Who is stronger in the relationship, Frank or Francy?
7. How does the loss Frank and Francy experience resonate today?
8. What role does chance play in their lives? In all our lives?
9. Would you have wanted a different ending? If so, what would you like to have seen happen to the characters?

Author Bio

RUIN's author Leigh Seippel wrote the worlds of its characters having walked many of their paths.

Time Farm, the decayed Hudson Valley farmstead where Frank and Francy flee, is a poignant character in itself. As is the formerly ruined farm that Leigh and his wife, Susan, brought to vibrant variety. Their times brought flocks of sheep and goats, laying hens so privileged their big coop is named the Poultry Palace, a vineyard and winery, an apiary operation, and a vegetable garden sized for a large family. Much of the work there is by their own hands.

Unlike the very unlucky Frank and Francy, whose tale of disaster in RUIN is loosely based upon that of now deceased acquaintances, for Susan and Leigh life in Manhattan was not left forever. They are members of private clubs and institutions there like those the Campbells had to leave behind. Leigh sequentially progressed from finance attorney to co-founding a large private equity firm to venture capital investing. Career time took him for periods to West Texas, the Deep South and London. Personality portrayals in RUIN draw upon experiences there.

And Leigh's love of nature led to long financial support of and service on the boards of two of the largest American land and water conservancy foundations. He also now chairs the fishery conservation work of The Anglers' Club of New York, of which he has served as president.

The several fishing episodes of RUIN are all based to some extent on Leigh's own adventures astream, with one

exception a reader might guess. Often with Susan, he has fly fished across the United States, Eastern Canada, nearly a dozen countries of Europe, Russia, Turkey, Mongolia, India, Mexico, Argentina, New Zealand, Belize, Guatemala and the Bahamas.

For a dozen years, Leigh with a friend wrote and published *The Royal Coachman*, a commercially successful light-hearted journal of globe-trotting exploratory fishing with an eye to creature comforts. In pen name *The Royal Coachman*, Leigh wrote the introduction to a Simon & Schuster primer of how to fly fish. The Anglers? Club has privately published two books featuring his writing, and he has book reviewed for the Trout Unlimited national magazine *Trout*.

Since 1995, Leigh has been an executive committee leader of Checkerboard Film Foundation, an award-winning documentary film producer which has archived over 30 living history portrayals of major American visual artists and architects. The Checkerboard project is to preserve for posterity thoughtfully candid views of their own work by art world luminaries who will be famous and studied long after their passing.

Leigh grew up near the Chesapeake Bay in rural Maryland. He is a graduate of his local high school, of Columbia College and of Columbia Law School.

Critical Praise

?RUIN is a dangerously psychological romantic nightmare about a young couple?s loss and redemption. When disgraced financier Frank Campbell and his also bankrupted wife Francy escape Manhattan, they bottom out at an abandoned farmhouse in the Hudson Valley. As their marriage teeters, Frank takes up fly fishing and through it and hard artisanal work begins life again --- until things go deeply wrong again. Seippel unfurls this tragicomic tale in a haunting manner, deeply echoing the vulnerability of early Hemingway and the bitterness of T.S. Eliot. The journey is thrilling, its vividly evolving characters long memorable.?

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