

# READING GROUP GUIDE

## *Other People's Weddings* by Noah Hawley

**St. Martin's Press**

ISBN: 0-312-32273-9 (hardcover)

### **Introduction to *Other People's Weddings***

Laurie is a wedding photographer who has photographed more than a thousand weddings over the last ten years. One morning, she wakes up and wonders what happened to all those couples. She starts making calls. Some of them are still together. Others have split up. She begins a photography project to document what happens to love after the wedding. She photographs widowers and divorcees, homewreckers and stalkers.

She is still photographing weddings, and at one of them she meets a man who has sneaked into the proceedings. A crasher. They share a spark, a few moments of powerful chemistry, and then he's gone. Later, at home, she finds pictures of him at eleven other weddings she's photographed and wonders if his propensity to crash weddings is sweet or creepy. She starts looking for him at every wedding she photographs. When she finally sees him again, a romance begins between them.

Through her courtship, glimpses of her past emerge—her own first marriage and divorce, the things she is trying to get over, to get past, that threaten her new relationship. Her past makes her a ghost at all the weddings she photographs. Before the book is over, she has to tear down all the walls she has built.

## Praise for *Other People's Weddings*

"*Other People's Weddings* isn't the lighthearted romantic comedy the title suggests. Yes, it does have romance. And yes, it does have snappy one-liners. But it also has a dark side that exposes our fears about love, trust and commitment. I loved this novel, but buyer beware: You'll ache for the heroine, even as you'll applaud her wit and indomitable spirit."

- Jane Heller, author of *Lucky Stars* and *The Secret Ingredient*

"Better than a fly on the wall, Noah Hawley is a high-speed, wide-angle lens--and the portrait of American marriage he creates in *OTHER PEOPLE'S WEDDINGS* is sharper, darker, and infinitely more fun than anything in any leather-bound album."

- Nicholas Weinstock, author of *As Long As She Needs Me*

With "*Other People's Weddings*," Noah Hawley answers the question "Can a male writer get inside the head of an über-contemporary female protagonist?" with a resounding yes. The forces that fueled Hawley's *Paris Review* story "In the Air"--namely his attention to the intricacies and complications of modern relationships--are at work in this charming novel.

- Vandela Vida

"Oh how much cheap ink has been spilled complaining how hard it is to find the right man! As if he was an elusive pair of trendy pink heels, out of stock everywhere you shop. Finally, here's a novel about dating that doesn't pretend love is an island paradise, and recognizes that chill in the air is leaking from a shattered past we thought we'd sealed off."

- Po Bronson, author of *What Should I Do With My Life?*

## Reading Group Guide Questions

1. Though Laurie is our guide through her story, it takes her a while to confess all her secrets to us. It seems there are layers she isn't comfortable divulging until after we've spent a good deal of time with her. How did this make you feel as reader?
2. The book contains three separate, but parallel storylines. We see Laurie in the present moment, navigating her photography project and her relationship with Gilligan. We see flashbacks of her marriage to and divorce from Jim. And we follow the relationship of her parents and how it affected her ideas about men and women. Does structuring the book this way strengthen your sense of her character and add to the emotional impact of the story? Or was it distracting to keep changing tracks?
3. Jerome accuses Laurie of being a ghost who doesn't so much work the weddings she shoots as haunt them. Does this description seem apt? Why do you think Laurie chose to continue as a wedding photographer after her divorce?
4. After Gilligan breaks up with Laurie, when she can't get him out of her head, she photographs Damien, a stalker, who acts out the way she feels, though granted, to the extreme. This marriage of the internal and external appears other places in the book. Can you find them?
5. It seems that every time Laurie let herself get close to Gilligan her photo project would expose her to yet another reminder of how rare it is for relationships to work out, almost like a warning. Do

you think the project helped or hindered her in her attempt to get over the past and fall in love again?

6. *Other People's Weddings* is written from the point of view of a woman, though the author is a man. How well did he capture the inner world of his protagonist?
7. Both Lisa and Shelly's relationships are in trouble at different points in the book. In the case of Shelly, Laurie pushes her to call off her wedding, while at the same time she pushes Lisa to work it out with David. Did you agree with her choices? How did navigating these two crises help Laurie overcome her own relationship issues?
8. One of Laurie's central complaints is that love stories always end on wedding days. How did you feel about the book's ending? Do you think their relationship will last?

## About the Author

**Noah Hawley** is a screenwriter, filmmaker and photographer. He has directed two short films for the Fox Searchlab new director development program. His first novel, *A Conspiracy of Tall Men*, was optioned by Paramount. Noah Hawley adapted the screenplay. He has published stories in *The Paris Review*. He lives in San Francisco.