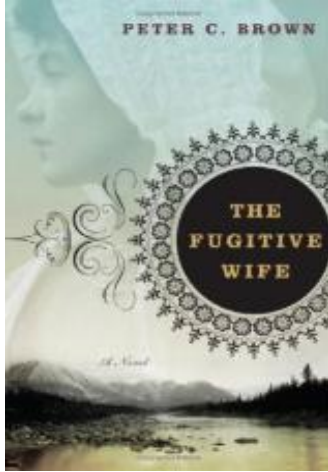


The Fugitive Wife

by Peter C. Brown



About the Book

A sweeping narrative, set in goldprospecting Alaska, where ambition, adventure, and romance collide --- and the usual rules are forgotten.

THE YEAR IS 1900. Fleeing from a stormy marriage, Essie, a Midwestern farm girl, joins up with prospectors bound for Nome, where the golden sands teem with dreamers, schemers, and high rollers. Feisty and resourceful, Essie soon makes money caring for horses and delivering mail to the miners' beach diggings. Soon, too, Essie is drawn to Nate Deaton, the idealistic foreman of the Cape Nome Company. Nate's Eastern background is in direct contrast to Essie's down-to-earth Minnesota upbringing, but there is a deeper problem: Leonard, Essie's stubborn and volatile husband, is sure to come after her.

"She had lived her life steered by the force of Leonard, against him." And when Leonard does travel north, astonishing scenes of pursuit, sacrifice, and crucial decision rise to a conclusion that is both surprising and inevitable.

Powerfully evoking a past world and the variable territory of the heart, this novel establishes Peter C. Brown as a consummate storyteller.

Discussion Guide

1. Is Essie idealized by the author, or does she have flaws that make her human?

2. By marrying Leonard she figured to get a husband who was a good worker and who was willing to let her direct the business of farming. In a society where farms were left to sons, what other choices were open to her? How were her strengths working against her in this decision?
3. How does Essie's thriving in Alaska change what she wants from life? Will the attributes that make her a business success in Alaska work in her favor when she returns to conventional society? What failings or blind spots might cause Essie difficulty in the future?
4. Was it believable to you that Leonard would go all the way to Alaska to try to win Essie back?
5. In struggling with her decision to take Leonard back, Essie asks herself "How could a person know between two wrong things?" How might Essie have justified turning Leonard away? What had Leonard done to make himself worthy of another chance? Nate accepts her decision, finding it "bullheaded and plain wrong," and yet he loves her better for it. Was Nate's acceptance a sign of strength or an indication he was unwilling to fight for what he believed?
6. Essie's pregnancy with Nate's child is too much for Leonard to see past in his effort to re-claim his marriage. If Essie had handled the situation differently, is there a chance Leonard might have accepted the child, and the marriage could have succeeded?
7. These characters lived in a different era; how do modern sensibilities affect your understanding or acceptance of their decisions?
8. At the end of the book, Essie embarks on her long journey to Worcester. If she finds Nate, will their relationship likely grow and deepen? In what ways was Nate a good or a bad match for Essie? Given how the novel ends, what kind of future do you imagine for Essie?

Author Bio

Peter C. Brown's grandfather was a prospector, the engineer for a gold mining company in Nome, Alaska, 1900-1902. "I never knew him," Brown says, "but his diaries and scrapbooks have always fired my imagination." A graduate of Beloit College, Brown is a retired business consultant. He and his wife live in St. Paul, Minnesota, where they keep a 1968 River Queen houseboat on the Mississippi River.

Critical Praise

"Told with old-fashioned brio and dead-eye skill, **The Fugitive Wife** gives us everything we could ask for in a novel: romance, high adventure, diamond-cut prose, and a story that traverses the great American landscape."

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