



The Meaning of Wife: A Provocative Look at Women and Marriage in the Twenty-first Century

Anne Kingston

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"One part The Beauty Myth . . . and one part Backlash"*--a provocative exploration of who and what a wife really is.

There is a wife crisis in North America, a brewing storm of conflicting forces swirling around what it means to be a wife at the beginning of the 21st Century. The word is so fraught with ambiguity that it has become a litmus test, eliciting from women emotions ranging from longing to antipathy, anxiety to derision. This crisis is at the heart of Anne Kingston's *The Meaning of Wife*.

Delving into the complex, troubling, and sometimes humorous contradictions, illusions, and realities of contemporary wifedom, Kingston takes the reader on a fascinating journey into the wedding industrial complex, which elevates the bride to a potent consumer icon; through the recent romanticization of domesticity; and across the conflicted terrain of wifely sexuality. She looks at "wife backlash," and the new wave of neo-traditionalism that urges women to marry before their "best-before" dates expire; explores the apotheosis of abused wives and the strange celebration of wives who kill; and muses on the fact that Oprah Winfrey and Martha Stewart, two of the world's wealthiest and most influential women, are both non-wives whose success has hinged on their understanding of wives. The result is an entertaining mix of social, sexual, historical, and economic commentary that is bound to stir debate even as it reframes our view of both women and marriage.

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