

Minus Me

Mameve Medwed

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In Mameve Medwed's novel *Minus Me*, after receiving devastating news about her health, a woman decides to leave her husband detailed directions on how to live the rest of his life without her.

Annie lives in a small town in Maine, where she's happily married to her childhood sweetheart, Sam. She was raised by her actress mother, Ursula, with whom she has a turbulent relationship. But she's found peace and happiness, despite multiple miscarriages and a stillbirth. All of that changes when she receives a devastating medical diagnosis.

Annie decides not to tell her husband what's happening. Instead, she begins writing him a manual, instructing him on how to live his life after she is gone: how to find love again, how to honor her memory, even how to do laundry. Post-It notes to Sam from Annie come at the start of each chapter; the narration is interspersed with handwritten lists and excerpts from the manual itself.

But when Ursula comes to town for a visit and discovers the manual, her discovery alters Annie's plans. What starts off as a novel about marriage, loss, and carrying on in the face of devastation evolves into a sometimes lagging story about the work involved in relationships, the limitations and struggles of motherhood, and what really matters in life.

Though some questions remain about their motivations and story lines, Medwed's appealing characters make *Minus Me* a thoughtful story about the promises that family members make to one another, about what it truly means to live, and about what people hope to pass on after they die.

JAIME HERNDON (January / February 2021)

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