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Essays

You're Married to Her?
Ira Wood
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The inattentive browser may pass on *You're Married to Her?*, mistaking it for a self-help guide about the romantic pursuit of married men—or a chick-lit novel with a plucky heroine. But she would be missing out: This slim collection of true accounts penned by a confirmed ne'er-do-well will provoke laughs, chuckles, and even the odd scream of outrage.

You're Married to Her? is the most recent work from Ira Wood, author of *The Kitchen Man, Going Public*, and more. The titular "her" is Wood's wife, beloved feminist and novelist Marge Piercy. This book is a splendid detailing of his failings—those failings that prompt others to wonder about their marriage.

And his failings are legion: In "A Major Work of Fiction," an insecure Wood tells his wealthy girlfriend that he is an orphan so she doesn't have to meet his embarrassing parents. While the lie ingratiates him with her family, it twists his life out of recognition, and winds up exploding in his face; "The Gift" hilariously recounts Wood's father and his obsessive envy of others; "Satyricon" is a ribald tale and has the memorable description of a girlfriend's oral prowess: "I can say I was reminded of Wendy just the other day while watching Animal Planet and seeing a python ingesting a wood rat"; In "The Syllogism," he blows all his money on cocaine. Sexual addiction, vanity, and political deviousness round out the collection.

Wood's writing is, as he might say, a trip. He is creative and free in his narration—yet his stories are much more than anecdotes. They have a strong arc while resisting moralism. He also has a gift for metaphor. He describes the act of writing, for a spectator, as "an activity with all the attendant drama of a sea cow grazing in a shallow Florida river." In one essay his slacks "girded the soft flesh of my belly like piano wire." He introduces his own father with a concept called "The Small Penis Rule."

Although Piercy's physical role is sparse, her presence pervades the bulk of Wood's stories: After all, she is the love of his life. "Readers seeking insight into the creativity of a

prolific American artist had best look at my wife's own memoir, for these are my stories," Wood explains at the outset.

The irony of this book and its title is that after reading a few of the stories, the discerning reader might wonder more than ever why she is with him. Perhaps it is, as he muses, that he is "a lucky young man she chose not merely to put up with but to love, and for slim rewards except being fiercely loved in return." It's a good enough answer.

Leia Menlove