

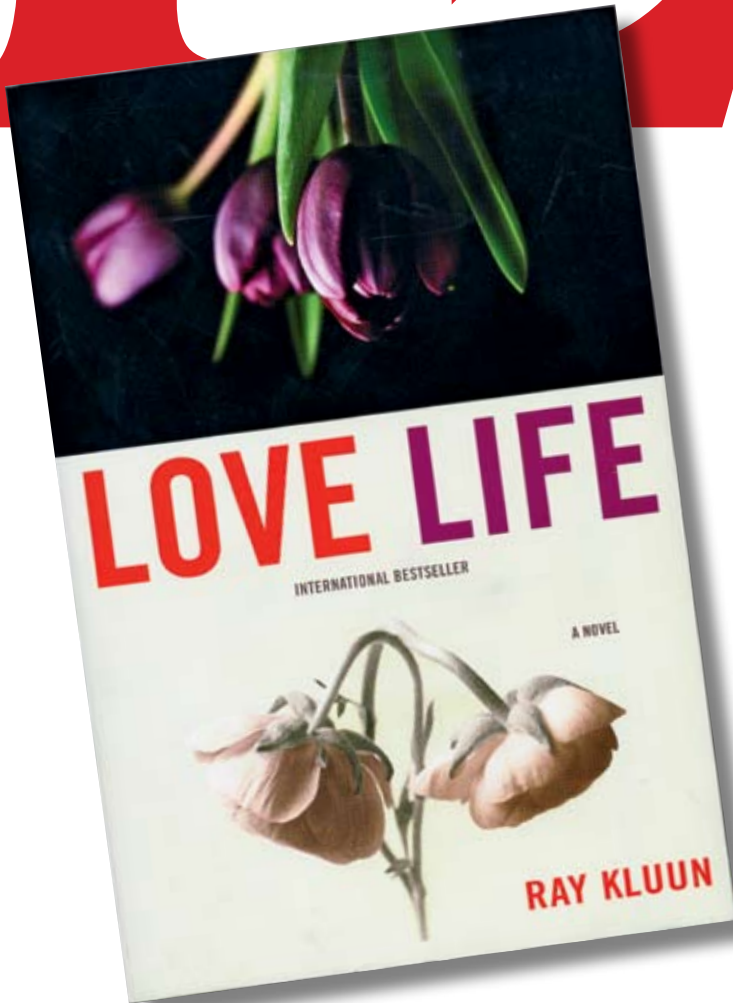
## LOVE, LIES AND DEATH

In 2001, Ray Kluun's wife Judith was diagnosed with breast cancer. While she was dying, Ray slept around. *Love Life* is the novel that resulted from this period in Kluun's life. A best-seller in Kluun's native Holland, *Love Life* was translated into English this past summer.

In an interview with *Marie Claire* magazine, just before the book's U.S. release, Kluun was asked whether or not he worried about a different response to his book in the United States as opposed to Europe. He answered, "Cities like New York and L.A. aren't that different from here. But I'm not sure the book will be very popular in Alabama."

Is Ray Kluun a liberated, free-thinking, modern man re-defining notions of love and relationships or just another garden variety jerk? Kluun's book raises questions on topics from monogamy and infidelity to end-of-life care and the ravages of disease.

Here's what our book club had to say. Let us know what you think on our website at [www.lipstickbhm.com](http://www.lipstickbhm.com).



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**TINA HATCH**  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

I didn't understand why Dan expected accolades and awards for taking care of Carmen. Isn't that what you're supposed to do as the "loving" spouse? Marriage isn't all rainbows and unicorns. Bad things happen, even in good marriages, and you soldier through together and your marriage comes out better for it. Dan and Carmen clearly didn't have the best relationship to begin with, but to focus so much of the book on how

much he was going through as his wife lay dying underscores the fact that Dan loved Carmen for what she could do for him ... if he really loved her at all.



**LAUREL MILLS**  
MANAGING EDITOR

Overall, this book left me sad and angry. I don't know if I was more enraged by the narrator's cheating, his incredibly selfish unprotected cheating or his refusal to apologize for cheating. It also strikes me as incredibly selfish and almost cruel to write such a novel when this might be the only way in which the author's daughter will ever know her mother. As a small child, she will have no actual memories of

her mom, so when she grows up, all she'll have is a few hundred pages detailing her mother's graphic death and her father's jackass ways.



**AMY SOVEROW**  
MARKETING GURU

For me, the strength of the book was the compelling story it told rather than any sense of artistry with the writing. I think most people would like to believe that all spouses are faithful and that one would be particularly devoted if the other were dying, but life just isn't always like that.

Infidelity was an understood part of this relationship. I felt that the pain and misery of watching his wife die of cancer engendered, for me, a sense of understanding of how Dan took solace and support in another relationship. He cared for Carmen at the end of her life with an intimacy that was deep and loving, even it was clearly flawed.

## Discussion Questions:

**1** On page 5, Dan announces that he is "a hedonist with serious monophobia." He makes no attempt to hide his opinion about monogamy. Do you respect Dan for his honesty and self-awareness? Do you find him brazen and unlikable? Do you think Dan likes and accepts this part of his personality? Is his behavior towards women an addiction? Is any relationship with Dan doomed to be dysfunctional?

**2** On that same page, Dan says that Carmen "loved [him] too much" and "turned a blind eye to my infidelities and treated them like a character defect that couldn't be helped." Do you think Carmen is bothered by Dan's infidelity or does she accept it as par for the course with Dan? In knowing this, is Carmen just as responsible for the course of the relationship as Dan is?

**3** On page 38, Dan asks Dr. Scheltema if Carmen wouldn't be better off taking treatment at another hospital or even in America. Do you think Carmen's health was sacrificed by being at the wrong hospital? Do you think Carmen would have had a better chance of survival in America?

**4** On page 65, Dan remarks that Carmen's diagnosis means that their lives "[aren't] paradise anymore. Can "paradise" and an unfaithful marriage co-exist?

**5** On page 95, Dan asks himself: "Maybe I attach more importance to Carmen's breast than I do to Carmen's life?" Do you think Dan is more upset by the loss of Carmen's breast than her potential loss of life? Is this a natural first reaction? Do you think most men would feel this way?

**6** On page 114, Dan thinks he's lost his wedding ring after cheating on his wife in Miami and seems to hit a sort of rock bottom. Later he recovers to continue clubbing and going out with other women. Do you think Dan was truly concerned about his wedding ring or more worried

about being caught by his wife?

**7** On page 156, Dan extols the difference between infidelity and an affair. Is there a difference? Is one more dangerous to the fate of a marriage than the other?

**8** On page 163, Rose complains about the difficulty of having an affair with a married man whose wife is dying of cancer. Do you feel any sympathy for Rose? Is Rose more or less guilty than Dan for her role in this affair?

**9** On page 184, Carmen offers Dan a divorce and he declines. Why do you think Dan stays in this marriage? Why do you think Carmen stays?

**10** On page 202, Dan learns that Carmen is dying and even though he promised her in Club Med that he wouldn't cheat anymore, he texts Rose. Do you understand Dan's reaction? Do you have any sympathy for him?

**11** Rose and Carmen are very different women. What do you make of Dan's attraction to both of them?

**12** On page 237, Dan says that he "[looks] forward to the future every day." What "future" do you think Dan is referring to? A life with Rose? A life without Carmen? A life free of cancer and its pain?

**13** On page 298, Carmen chooses euthanasia. What do you make of the different attitude towards euthanasia in Europe as opposed to America?

**14** On page 346, Carmen says her final goodbye. These final chapters are very emotional. Do you see Dan any differently in these scenes as you did in the ones earlier in the book?

**15** On page 352, Dan asks about bringing Rose to Carmen's funeral. Is this appropriate?

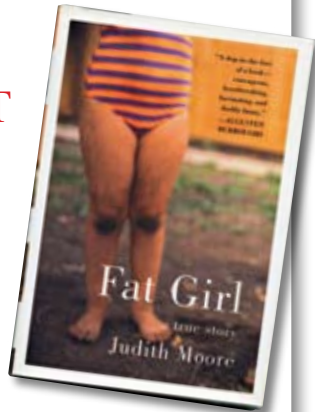
# General Questions:

- 1 Is the attitude towards marriage and monogamy different in Europe than that of the United States? If so, why do you think that is?
- 2 The narrator is very honest throughout *Love Life*. Do you find that you judge Dan's actions any less or more because of this forthrightness?
- 3 Dan and his friends are the only males present in the novel. Neither Dan's father nor Carmen's father plays a role in the book. What effect do you think this has on the novel?
- 4 Do you think those who have been involved with married men and women will see the book differently from those who haven't?
- 5 If a relationship is damaged, either by infidelity or some other trauma, can a major, life-altering event like a diagnosis of cancer repair that relationship?

Tell us what you think. Join the discussion at [www.lipstickbhm.com](http://www.lipstickbhm.com).

nextmonth>>

“ I AM FAT. I AM NOT SO FAT THAT I CAN'T FASTEN THE SEAT BELT ON THE PLANE. BUT, FAT I AM.”



With three powerful words, Judith Moore, nationally-recognized, award-winning author of *Never Eat Your Heart Out*, begins her memoir *Fat Girl*.

“This will not be a book about how I had an eating disorder and how I conquered this disorder through therapies or group process or antidepressants or religion or twelve-step programs or a personal trainer or white-knuckling it or the love of a good man (or woman),” Moore continues. “This will be the last time in this book you will see the words ‘eating disorder.’”

*Fat Girl* raises questions of body image, self-esteem, motivation and the events and feelings that make us who we are. As the book jacket says, this is a book “for any woman who has ever had a love-hate relationship with food and with how she looks.” (In other words, this is a book for any woman.)

Find a copy of *Fat Girl* and share your thoughts with us this May.

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