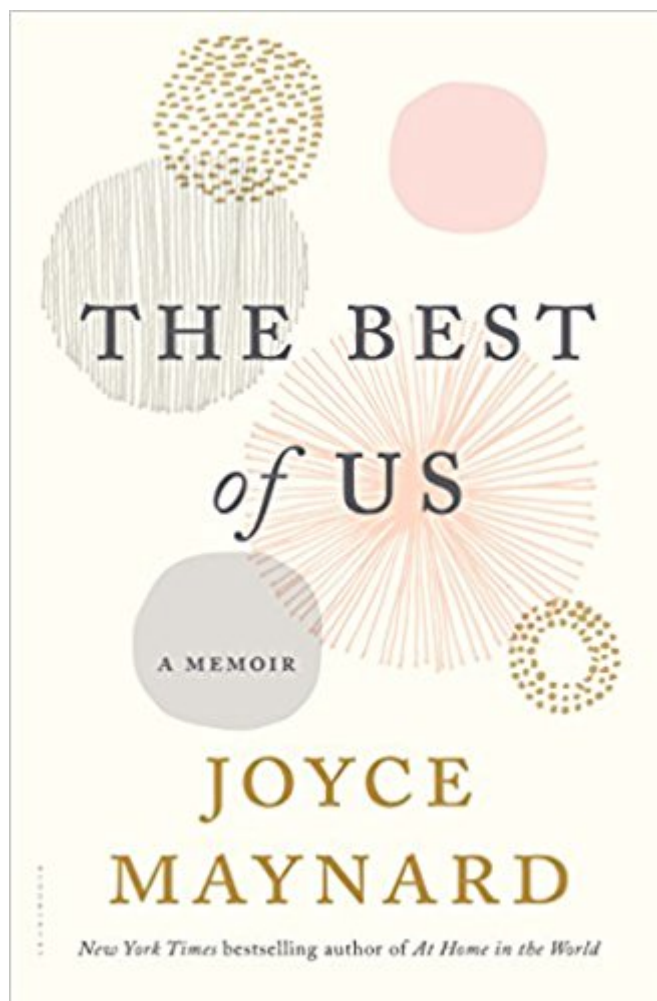


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# The Best Of Us: A Memoir



## Synopsis

From New York Times bestselling author Joyce Maynard, a memoir about discovering strength in the midst of great loss--"heart wrenching, inspiring, full of joy and tears and life." (Anne Lamott) In 2011, when she was in her late fifties, beloved author and journalist Joyce Maynard met the first true partner she had ever known. Jim wore a rakish hat over a good head of hair; he asked real questions and gave real answers; he loved to see Joyce shine, both in and out of the spotlight; and he didn't mind the mess she made in the kitchen. He was not the husband Joyce imagined, but he quickly became the partner she had always dreamed of. Before they met, both had believed they were done with marriage, and even after they married, Joyce resolved that no one could alter her course of determined independence. Then, just after their one-year wedding anniversary, her new husband was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. During the nineteen months that followed, as they battled his illness together, she discovered for the first time what it really meant to be a couple--to be a true partner and to have one. This is their story. Charting the course through their whirlwind romance, a marriage cut short by tragedy, and Joyce's return to singleness on new terms, *The Best of Us* is a heart-wrenching, ultimately life-affirming reflection on coming to understand true love through the experience of great loss.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This haunting story, penned by a master wordsmith, is a reminder to savor every loved one and every day." - starred review, *Booklist* "In this touching memoir, Maynard (*To Die For*; *At Home in the World*) chronicles her second marriage. She beautifully renders the joy of falling in love later in life and the pain of watching her husband die of pancreatic cancer. Maynard's heartfelt story will

resonate with those who have lost loved ones." - Publishers Weekly "The Best of Us is so candid, so deeply moving, so powerful . . . a testament to human resilience. Joyce Maynard is unfathomably heroic." - Joyce Carol Oates "I love this new work. I think it is the most important writing of her life--profound, heart wrenching, inspiring, full of joy and tears and life." - Anne Lamott "Filled with passion and humor and beauty and aching sadness, The Best of Us gets at the heart of what love is: a willingness to open your heart completely to another person despite the risk of heartbreak." - Christina Baker Kline "Joyce has captured her all too brief time with Jim in The Best of Us with her characteristic honesty and with so much love that my heart broke and soared on every page. Everyone needs to read this book." - Ann Hood "Maynard's lyrical, moving, break-your-heart memoir will make you love a little harder, appreciate each second a little more, and shake your world in the best of ways." - Caroline Leavitt "This fiercely honest book is as much about life as it is about death. We understand the magnitude of Maynard's loss because she has shown us the magnitude of her gain: the transformative joy of finding love in her late fifties. I could not stop turning the pages." - Anne Fadiman "Joyce Maynard's memoir of life, death, and love is written with honesty, intimacy and a generosity of spirit that left me weeping, and in awe. I loved it." - Abigail Thomas "The Best of Us is shattering in the best possible sense. With exquisite honesty, bravery, and large-heartedness, Joyce Maynard gives us a love story that we read breathlessly, even though we know how it will end. This is a beautiful story about the complexity of ever daring to adore another human being. I was moved and transfixed." - Dani Shapiro "Oh! This book! Tender, insightful, ruminative, soaring. To find such love and then to lose it, and to capture so much of its beauty on the meager page--Joyce Maynard alchemizes life-numbing pain into dazzling prose." - Hope Edelman

Joyce Maynard is the author of sixteen books including the novels *To Die For* and *Labor Day* (both adapted for film) and the bestselling memoir *At Home in the World*. Her essays and columns have appeared in dozens of publications and numerous collections. She is a frequent performer with *The Moth*, a fellow of the MacDowell Colony and Yaddo, and founder of the Lake Atitlan Writers' Workshop. She is the mother of three grown children, and makes her home in Lafayette, California.

Everyone is looking for their soulmate, and many do find them. It took Joyce Maynard until her sixtieth year to find her soulmate, and then she wasn't really sure. She was dating another man at the time, though she knew that man was not the one for a long term relationship. She found this new man on Match.com. After a long phone call, she agreed to meet Joe for dinner. They were both smitten at this dinner, and decided to see each other again. For Joyce it was difficult to give up her

independence as a single woman after her quarter century divorce. She lived her life, as an author, traveller, lecturer, and had a wonderful life. Some rough spots here and there in this new relationship, but a lot of fun and adventure. Jim Barringer's children were not so sure about this new love, hers were more accepting. In another year they married on a hilltop in her New Hampshire and had a glorious month in the east visiting all the places she loved. And, then home, to Oakland, where Jim was a lawyer. They found a new home in Lafayette, California, a home they both loved. More travel, concerts, living the good life. And, then, a year after they were married Jim was diagnosed with cancer of the pancreas. A great deal of time was spent finding the right oncologist, the right care, and a surgeon to remove the tumor. Joyce documented their entire life up to this time, and then in great earnest for the next year. Joyce tells us she learned what marriage really meant during this year, and she dedicated herself to be with Jim, and to help see him through his treatments. Joyce Maynard has written a book dedicated to her true love, Jim. This may be her best book to date, I became completely engrossed, and read the book in several days. What spectacular writing, I felt like I was part of the team, or a silent observer in their lives. Whatever Jim needed, Joyce made sure he got it. His love for her is as evident as hers for him. A true love affair showing the highs and the lows in a marriage. The research and preparation and daily care for someone with pancreatic cancer is detailed. This book is a primer on the care of someone who goes through delicate surgery to save their life. The cancer therapies, the pancreatic cancer support groups, and the bonds they formed, and life in and out of the hospital. This is an emotional peak into someone's soul as they live their lives the best they can. *The Best Of Us*, is one of those books that will leave you thinking about Joyce and Jim, and their journey, a tribute to both of them. Highly Recommended. prisrob 07-03-17

This is a touching memoir about love and loss. when the author, a celebrated author goes on a date with a successful attorney she knows she has found the man of her dreams. Although she clearly doesn't follow the advice of the dating gurus, she shares enough information, perhaps too much information about her problems. this includes the loneliness that beset her after two decades of divorce, the empty nest syndrome she attempted to address by adopting two Ethiopian children and the discord that lead her to her eventually rehoming them. Instead of running for his life, Jim offered her support and understanding. This lead to romance and eventually marriage. But their bliss was interrupted when he was stricken with pancreatic cancer. This is a well written memoir that proves not only that love is possible at any age but that the worst of times can bring out the best in people. It is a poignant telling of a second chance at love that was ended by a merciless killer. the author

details the rounds of medical treatment and appointments and the toll it takes physically and psychologically. I found the author a bit needy and at times annoying but overall this is a moving portrait of a marriage.

Joyce Maynard is a well-known author who is no stranger to controversy, from a youthful relationship with an much older literary icon to problems with an attempt to adopt sisters from Ethiopia. I have enjoyed her novels but selected this memoir not really knowing what to expect. The Best of Us relates the long illness and ultimate death of her husband Jim from pancreatic cancer while they are almost newlyweds. The book is told exclusively from Maynard's point of view, and therein lies some of the problems, at least for me: I never feel I got to know Jim. Unlike the brilliant When Breath Become Air, written by a surgeon dying young of lung cancer, we never get inside the head of the elderly Jim. As a chronicle of Maynard's journey and thought processes it is full of details and some unsparing looks at how she handles her husband's decline. I found the book too long, and, since the wife of one of my oldest friends recently died of pancreatic cancer, I sometimes wished I didn't now know what his spouse went through in her final days. Based on the writing alone I would would give this 5 stars, but the length and repetitious nature of many of the passages brought it down to 4 stars for me.

How would you feel when you find the love of your life, late in life, and the promise for a long future suddenly goes away? Obviously, when you open this book, you know from the beginning that the author's husband is going to die. But this book is more of a detailed account of their love. It's refreshing to read about a middle aged couple finding love and happiness again. I can relate to being on my own in middle age and of course, you always keep that glimmer of hope that maybe you'll still meet someone special. The book is filled with everyday life as a couple; reading to each other, hiking, driving, long conversations, wine, dinner and just enjoying each other's company. Also, Maynard doesn't sugar coat it. She's introspective and admits when she has acted selfishly or gotten mad at something trivial, but she's truthful. She writes of love and then of course, loss, but she writes with joy about their short time together-even through the pain of illness. Recommended

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