

Press Kit

Crush

A novel by

Ada

Calhoun



Dear Reader,

This winter, Viking is thrilled to publish **CRUSH** (on sale: 2/25/25), the fiction debut from *New York Times* bestselling author Ada Calhoun, whose previous books include the celebrated memoir *Also a Poet* and the cultural histories *St. Marks Is Dead* and *Why We Can't Sleep*. Calhoun brings her signature wit and humor to this gripping, sumptuous, zeitgeist-y novel about the state of marriage, midlife, and what happens when both are upended by the sudden, electrifying passion of a crush. Praised by Emma Straub, Isaac Fitzgerald, Molly Ringwald, and more, **CRUSH** is an “angsty, metaphysical, literature-besotted love story . . . [It] interrogates all that we think we know about love and soulmates, commitment and conviction, while tracking the long struggle to fully become oneself and do right,” (*Booklist*, starred review). Destined to become a classic novel about marriage, **CRUSH** is a must-read debut of 2025.

What happens when a seemingly perfect marriage is challenged by the constraints of convention? **CRUSH** brings readers into the life of a woman who has it all: a successful career, deep friendships, happy parents, a good kid, and a husband she still loves. But when her spouse urges her to redefine the narrow labels of husband and wife, the very best kind of hell breaks loose—sex, heartbreak and heart rekindling, and a rediscovered sense of all that is possible. For the first time in our unnamed narrator’s life, “having it all” isn’t accompanied by silent compromises.

After she reluctantly agrees to open up their marriage, our narrator finds herself completely overcome when she encounters David, a “bookish and smoldering” friend from college. Over a series wildly erudite and delving texts and emails, they become consumed by questions of fidelity, lust, responsibility, and integrity. When their epistolary romance turns carnal, our protagonist must decide what it truly means to be loyal to her own needs and desires.

Tapping into our current cultural moment—where many are reevaluating how partnerships should work in a postpandemic society, what fulfillment really looks like, and how we define love, commitment, and happiness—**CRUSH** offers an unfiltered look at what happens when we dare to ask for more from our lives and those we choose to spend them with.

Using Calhoun’s personal experiences as a jumping off point, **CRUSH** is more than a novel—it’s a yearning manifesto that speaks to every type of romantic about holding on to all it’s possible to love: friends, children, parents, passion, lovers, husbands, all of the world’s good books, and most of all your own deep sense of purpose. As intimate, captivating, hilarious, and profound as a long-awaited call with your best friend, Calhoun’s writing is fresh, direct, and irresistible. I hope you will consider coverage in February!

Thank you,

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About the Author: **Ada Calhoun** is the author of *Also a Poet*, named one of the best books of 2022 by *The New York Times*, NPR, and *The Washington Post*, longlisted for the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction, and featured on the *Today* show and *PBS NewsHour*. Her other books include *St. Marks Is Dead* and the *New York Times* bestseller *Why We Can't Sleep*.

Praise for **Crush**

NAMED A MOST ANTICIPATED BOOK OF 2025

by *Time*, *Vulture*, *Bustle*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Literary Hub*

"Calhoun has a gift for explaining complicated emotions with concise, carefully chosen prose.

If you're a woman of a certain age whose hot flashes have reignited other fires within, you will read and feel recognized." —***Vulture***

"[A] giddy new romance sets the stage for an exploration of marital constructs and what it means to seek desire at any age." —***Bustle***

"One of my faves of the year so far, bringing up similar themes featured in 2024's fabulous *All Fours* by Miranda July, although *Crush* is a less wacky and more cerebral story about a woman/wife/parent in midlife who begins to wonder if there's a way to have *more*." —***AARP***

"*Crush* is about the liberation and danger of chasing desire and the havoc it can wreak on a marriage. . . . Interesting food for thought." —***The Seattle Times***

"*Crush* (such a charged word) interrogates all that we think we know about love and soulmates, commitment and conviction, while tracking the long struggle to fully become oneself and do right."
—***Booklist*, starred review**

"A fizzy and powerful exploration of modern marriage . . . It's both more than a romance novel and absolutely a romance novel. It's a delight." —***Literary Hub***

"Chock-full of great lines . . . Anything Ada Calhoun wants to write is well worth reading." —***Kirkus Reviews***

"Visceral, intelligent, funny, emotional, and layered. A revolutionary romance for 'good girls' everywhere."
—**SHAUNA NIEQUIST, author of *I Guess I Haven't Learned That Yet***

"A vertiginous—yet somehow also clarifying—novel that will grab you by your shoulders and shake you until you feel alive." —**ISAAC FITZGERALD, author of *Dirtbag, Massachusetts***

"I didn't just read *Crush*; I inhaled it like it would save my life. . . . I loved this book. And I loved its honest depiction of what love can do to and for us."
—**BETHANY BALL, author of *The Pessimists***

"This novel made me feel dizzy and I loved every second. Calhoun can seduce me any day of the week."
—**EMMA STRAUB, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *This Time Tomorrow***

"Ada Calhoun's *Crush* is a gripping fever dream of a book luring readers into the beguiling depths of desire, ecstasy, and obsession."
—**MOLLY RINGWALD**



A conversation with **Ada Calhoun**, author of **Crush**

Your debut novel is about marriage, midlife, and what happens when the overwhelming desire of a crush upends both. Would you tell us more about **CRUSH and your inspirations for the novel?**

Crush is about a happily married woman who develops a crush on a friend of hers and tries to figure out how to stay close to him without destroying her marriage. She and this friend, who's a professor, basically ransack the entire history of world literature looking for advice on how to protect her marriage without ignoring their profound connection. *Crush* is fiction but it's also a sequel of sorts to earlier books of mine. In writing my memoir, *Also a Poet*, I came to believe that I had to stop working so hard to be "good." For my book about Generation X women, *Why We Can't Sleep*, I interviewed hundreds of women who were asking hard questions about why they were doing so much for other people and so little for themselves.

You share some similarities with your narrator in **CRUSH. How did the novel evolve from, and beyond, your own experiences?**

Yes, like some of my favorite novels—Nora Ephron's *Heartburn* and Sigrid Nunez's *The Friend*, for example—my narrator is like me in a lot of ways. But what was great about writing fiction was I could make everyone behave however I wanted them to. I enjoyed adding characters and scenes and giving the narrator this perfect, life-altering love interest. And I could work through some of my own experiences at the end of my father's life, but at a healthy distance. It was especially fun to merge a few of my smart friends, plus my therapist, plus some stuff I read, into the narrator's one superhumanly helpful best friend. Writing memoir I would get frustrated sometimes because the people around me weren't acting in a way that was convenient for the plot. Fiction solved that problem!

How do you see the narrator's story reflecting broader conversations about love, desire, and commitment in today's postpandemic society?

When I wrote my *New York Times* bestseller *Why We Can't Sleep* and the article that became that book, "The New Midlife Crisis," for Oprah.com, I talked to hundreds of women who said they were overwhelmed and exhausted and having fantasies of blowing up their lives. Then, in the worst way, the pandemic blew it up for them. While it made some things much harder on these women (like caregiving and job instability), it also gave them this opportunity to stop and ask big questions, like, "Why am I doing *everything*? What if I just . . . do what I want?" As soon as the narrator begins asking those questions in earnest, everything gets way more complicated, but I'd argue it doesn't get worse. Coming out of a period that involved a lot of caregiving, and pushed by her husband to question the rules of their marriage, she winds up having all kinds of new and surprising experiences.

For all that **CRUSH explores, our narrator's name is never revealed. What was appealing about having an anonymous narrator?**

For me, reading fiction usually means projecting myself into the story. So I personally enjoy a narrator who's sort of a blank slate. This book's been compared to Miranda July's *All Fours* (which is flattering because I really enjoyed it!), but one person told me, "When I read that book, I thought about Miranda July, who's this very singular character; when I read this book, I thought about myself."

You've ghostwritten a lot of big books. While I know you can't talk about them because of the nature of the job, can you share how that work relates to what you talk about in CRUSH?

When I'm helping someone write a book it often feels like having a crush on them. Helping someone tell their story, you often wind up with that crush-like enthusiasm where you want to get inside their head and know every last thing they're thinking and how they think it. It can be similarly intoxicating. I often dream about the people I collaborate with, and I always dream about my crushes.

Your narrator believes that every problem, even a love triangle, can be solved with the right reading list. Throughout CRUSH, your characters engage with many historical and cultural texts to help them understand their surprising connection. What are your top titles to help someone navigate a crush?

Well, it depends on what you want to do with your crush.

If you want to appreciate how a crush feels like something you have no control over I'd go with . . .

The Chinese Pleasure Book: "The most deeply felt affinities between people were likened to 'soundless music'. . . . Intimate friendship hardly qualifies as completely 'voluntary' in the modern sense."

If you want a great metaphor for how it feels as a crush evolves . . .

Pure Colour: a Novel by Sheila Heti: "A road was being laid, though nothing was yet travelling on that road. Some workers were doing it—it was the gods—and it was happening far too quickly! They always worked so fast—so much faster than humans could ever understand."

If you want an excuse to act on your crush, I don't think you can do better than . . .

Saint Augustine: "Give me chastity and continence—but not yet."

I'll add that mixtapes are at least as good as books for stoking crushes, and [here's one for CRUSH](#). (Songs include "Another Girl, Another Planet" by The Only Ones; "Breathless" by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds; "Crush Story" by Too Much Joy: "Everything you've ever said is brilliant / Anything you want to do is fine with me.")

What do you hope readers take away most from CRUSH?

Crushes can reveal what we long for in our lives. Especially as women who've pushed down our own desires in the course of taking care of others or following social conventions, I think we should listen to our longings. We don't need to always act on them, but I think it's important to admit what they are, and to let ourselves have whatever kinds of love we want that become available to us, whether that's romantic love, maternal love, the love of friends, or more surprising or nebulous kinds of love, like crushes or pen pals. Like me, the narrator spent most of her life as a teacher's pet, working hard, taking care of other people, and trying to be responsible and considerate. Without becoming unkind or cavalier, she learns in the course of the book that some things are more important than goodness—and that sometimes being loyal to yourself means blowing it all up.