

The Sleeping Father (Today Show Book Club #20)

Matthew Sharpe



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The Sleeping Father begins with a divorced dad who inadvertently combines two incompatible antidepressant medications, goes into a coma, has a stroke, and emerges with brain damage. His teenage son—the protagonist of the book, Chris—and his teenage daughter—Cathy—inherit money from their grandfather and decide to rehabilitate him on their own. decide to make one.

Absent an adequate father, the children decide to make one, bringing with it a host of difficulties and opportunities. Chris tries everything from sex to capitalism in his search for guidance on the path to adulthood and Cathy, believing her secular Jewishness inadequate in the provision of a benign & divine Father, looks to Catholicism for solace and meaning.

The Sleeping Father explores the shift in the way Americans think about mental health: away from regarding ourselves as being shaped by our upbringings and toward regarding ourselves as being shaped by the chemicals in our bloodstreams. The American family, in this novel, emerges as a microcosm of larger social institutions; Moms and Dads as in-home teachers, priests, presidents, and CEOs. In focusing on the Schwartz family in crisis, Sharpe addresses the larger crisis in faith and authority in contemporary American life.

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