

# [PDF] Le Mariage

## Diane Johnson - pdf download free book

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### Books Details:

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Author: Diane Johnson  
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### Description:

In the delicious , Diane Johnson's heroine dipped her American toe into the unfathomably deep waters of French culture. In Johnson's follow-up, *Le Mariage*, we plunge right in and swim among American expatriates and French high society types as they try to navigate relationships with one another. The novel makes references, both overt and oblique, to one of the great achievements of French culture, Jean Renoir's *Rules of the Game*, a film that steps lightly between farce and tragedy. *Le Mariage* does the same.

The story centers, like *Anna Karenina*, around two couples. Anne-Sophie, a *bon chic, bon genre* Parisienne who sells equestrian-themed antiques at the flea market, is engaged to Tim, an American journalist, "one of those large pink-cheeked rugby-player types." Clara, also an American, is a film actress married to her director, the brilliant Serge Cray. The two lead a reclusive life on the outskirts of Paris until their serenity is broken by a couple of events: following a well-publicized murder, a couple of American tourists drop in on the Crays and won't leave; and Clara is arrested for

desecrating a national monument, when all she was trying to do was decorate her house.

These various settings--the flea market, the director's chateau, even the jail--allow Johnson ample room for the kind of Francophile fieldwork for which she is so justly famed. The engaged couple in particular provide lots of scope for details of Paris life: "One particular day, Tim suddenly knew he had found their apartment, on the Passage de la Visitation--the name itself so charming, the arrondissement so correct.... His heart lifted with the optimistic sense of the future that only real estate can bring." Minor characters abound, such as Anne-Sophie's mother, who writes the sort of hilariously intellectual dirty novels only the French can produce. Johnson delights in identifying such types, and sends them up with relish.

As in *Le Divorce*, Johnson delivers a trumped-up ending--this time at the Crays' chateau, where the rehearsal dinner for Anne-Sophie and Tim's wedding turns into a genteel French shootout--or, rather, standoff. The author has earned her finale this time, though. At the beginning, she asks the question that haunts all innocents-abroad novels: "Perhaps there are no natural contradictions between the French landscape and the Americans who inhabit it so diffidently, but it often seems that Americans would do well to stay out of what we do not understand. Or is it we who bring the harm?" This time, more explicitly than ever, Diane Johnson makes her answer an emphatic yes. And in doing so, she lays claim to the legacy of Henry James that has been linked with her name since *Le Divorce*. --*Claire Dederer* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**From Publishers Weekly** Even more knowing and perceptive than *Le Divorce*, Johnson's second novel about American expatriates in France is another wickedly clever comedy of manners. Her amused irony infuses this story of two romantic relationships. Good-natured Tim Nolinger, an easygoing journalist of mixed American and Belgian ancestry, is engaged to adorable Anne-Sophie d'Arget, who runs a boutique selling equestrian memorabilia in the Paris flea market. When Tim pursues a story about a stolen medieval manuscript called the Driad Apocalypse, their lives intersect with those of a former American film star, Clara Holly, and her husband, famous and reclusive director Serge Cray, who live in a ch?teau in the suburbs of Paris. Peripheral characters include Anne-Sophie's mother, a cynical Parisienne novelist whose romance novels contain platitudinous advice about love that her daughter takes seriously; various members of the American community in Paris; the villagers of Etang-la-reine, who resent the rich property owners from the States and whose anger about the loss of their hunting rights triggers a plot against the Crays; two visitors from Clara's hometown in Oregon, and the members of a millennium cult there, who are pivotal in the drama of the purloined papers. What will be even more satisfying to Johnson's fans is the appearance of a character from *Le Divorce*, the dashing Antoine de Persand. In six degrees of separation, everybody is connected, yet the coincidences are artfully managed. Johnson's crisp manipulation of the engagingly convoluted plot is rooted in her central theme of French misconceptions about Americans, and vice versa. As exemplified by Holly and Cray, even those who share the same culture habitually fail to estimate the other accurately. Johnson's barbs are sophisticated and sharp, her amused irony is easily maintained, and her finesse at narrative is as fine tuned as her cultural sensitivity and her instincts about human behavior. As the novel ends, it is not surprising that le mariage of Anne-Sophie and Tim seems doomed by misunderstandings, but an adulterous liaison between two other characters conveys the mesmerizing passion of true love. (Apr.)

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