



Tomcat in Love

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Thomas H. Chippering, Vietnam War veteran, linguistic professor, and skirt-chaser, has lost his wife, Lorna Sue, to a Tampa tycoon. His obsession with getting her back leads him to pursue her to Florida, where he spies on her and her new husband, and plots revenge on her and her brother, Herbie, whom he blames for their breakup. Herbie, Lorna Sue, and Thomas, childhood friends, are linked by the guilt generated by a childhood incident when Herbie nailed his sister's hand to a cross made with Thomas's plywood. This incident, and others from the past, keep coming back to Thomas, often in the form of words such as cross, tycoon, Tampa, church, and fire. However, even as he pursues Lorna Sue, Thomas cannot resist the charms of some of his students and Mrs. Robert Kooshof, a remarkably patient woman. Vietnam, a recurring theme for author Tim O'Brien, appears in the form of a squad of Green Berets who are seeking revenge on Thomas—or maybe not.

Thomas's pursuit of revenge, which brings nothing but havoc to his life, and his many lies could easily make the reader dislike him, but O'Brien manages to make this womanizing, pompous professor someone likable and even empathetic. This extremely well-written book, O'Brien's first comic effort, is an inventive and refreshing look at a man's obsession with love.

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