



When We Push through Sound

Geoff Sease

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In the heartfelt novel When We Push through Sound, a man rediscovers what it means to lead a life worth living.

A man faces a life-altering decision in Geoff Sease's emotive novel *When We Push through Sound*.

When Tristan's marriage to Sharon ends, he copes with long days at the office, stiff nightcaps, and an every-other-week custody rotation. He's distraught, and he loses himself in memories of successes that came before his divorce: his sports days, his love of playing music, and his early marriage and blooming career.

Three years after the divorce, Tristan emerges from this monotonous grind. He goes on a date with Julia, a barista who sings in a rock band. He also meets Beth, a pretty woman who runs an advertising agency. Then Tristan takes a big chance at work, after which he hears buzzing sounds in his ear—noise that increases at an exponential rate to match his stress. However, as the buzzing in Tristan's ear grows, so does his capacity for change.

The prose is poignant and reflective, with touches of humor. It includes title chapters like "At the Service of Teenage Whimsy" and flashbacks to the happy moments of Tristan's former marriage and time with his daughter, Sara, for whom his love is palpable. Tristan also has dreams about those he loves; Julie and Beth inspire and move him in different ways, even as Sharon still occupies his heart and mind.

Tristan is sympathetic in part because of his physical symptoms of stress, sadness, and aging. His fumbling reentry into dating leads to comical moments, in particular because Julie is younger and more emotional than he is. His inner loneliness comes to light as his relationship with Beth flourishes, forcing him out of the shadow of his relationship with Sharon. And Tristan's assistant, Marjorie, is a faithful and intelligent source of support, even when Tristan puts both of their careers at risk.

But as Tristan juggles work and the women in his life, his memories and new experiences sometimes meld, resulting in dreamy, meandering passages. Fast-moving and absorbing as it navigates its growing cast's intertwining lives, the story comes crashing down in the end, when Tristan is forced to face the major implications of a risky trading failure. Once again, he's sent careening toward a mental breakdown that forces one final choice, beyond which he could face oblivion.

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LEAH WEBSTER (December 28, 2023)

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