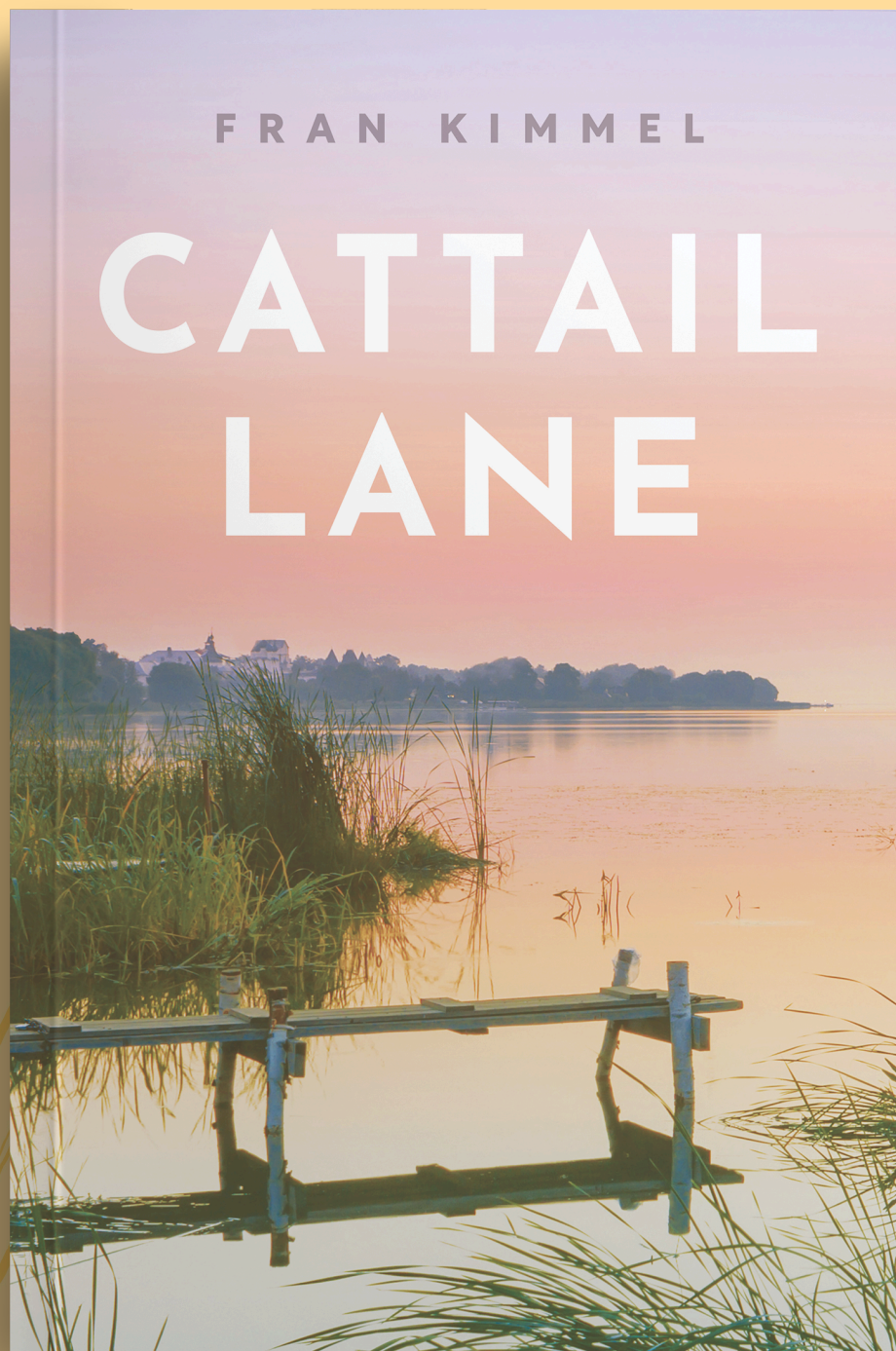


BOOK CLUB KIT



“It wasn’t much of a letter, just four lines.

*Dear Nick,
You have a son.
His name is Billy.
It’s time for you to come get him.
He’s a good boy.
Sincerely, Evelyn Peet*

Enough to throw Nick Ackerman kicking and screaming into fatherhood.”

Nick Ackerman’s life is an aimless circuit between his uninspiring job and the local bar until a note from a stranger changes everything. He learns he has a 14-year-old son, Billy, whose grandmother can no longer look after him. Nick takes in the resentful Billy and shuffles Grandma Evie off to the nearby dementia ward at Prairie View Manor. It’s there that they meet single mom Sarah, a favourite housekeeper with the Prairie View residents.

Nick, Sarah, and Billy all carry their own betrayals and disappointments, but during the dog days of summer, they are given a chance to leave past hurts behind and find a new kind of family.

PRAISE

“*Cattail Lane* is **a gorgeous and heartfelt novel** I read as a mediation on trust, loyalty, family ties, and forgiveness.”

– **JULIE KANE**, professor and collection strategies librarian, Washington and Lee University

“*Cattail Lane* is **a warm and wise multigenerational story** about family and redemption. Fran Kimmel writes with an empathetic heart and a keen eye about a man and his son, and the multitude of ripples their choices and their lives make. Her insights into the fluid nature and complex architecture of families make this novel **poignant and memorable**. A fine and heartening read.”

– **LORI HAHNEL**, author of *Vermin* and *Flicker*

“*Cattail Lane* is **a story of hope**: hope as it arrives in the life of a man who has lost his way, in the residents of a dementia ward, and in a quiet 14-year-old boy. With tenderness and humour, Fran Kimmel brings us deep into the hearts of characters trying to do right by others.”

– **ASTRID BLODGETT**, author of *You Haven’t Changed a Bit* and *This Is How You Start to Disappear*



Dear Reader,

Thank you for choosing *Cattail Lane* for your book club! I'm so grateful to have this chance to share Nick and Billy's journey with you, and I'm thrilled that you'll be exploring their story together.

Cattail Lane was inspired by some deeply personal experiences, particularly my time spent on a memory care unit, where my mother lived for several years. Those years brought a mix of emotions — joy, heartache, and an unexpected sense of community. Looking back, the friendships I formed with residents, caregivers, and other family members has left a lasting impact on me. I wanted to reflect this depth of connection in *Cattail Lane* — in the characters' struggles and in their moments of unexpected kindness and joy.

While *Cattail Lane* and *Goose Lake* are imagined places, this landscape too is a part of me. My parents long owned a lakeside cottage in central Alberta. It was there where my daughters and I learned to properly stoke a fire, to raid the secret saskatoon patch, and to experience the nights of marvels — great black starry spaces, coyote songs, the man in the moon. When ATVers started ripping up the surrounding wetlands, we fought hard with the county to protect that fragile ecosystem, just as Nick is trying to do when Billy comes into his life.

Both my family's struggles with dementia and my broader environmental concerns are woven into the fabric of this book, helping to shape the story's setting and the challenges its characters face. Throughout the novel, you'll find characters who are each dealing with some form of loss or upheaval. Yet, as they begin to lean on one another and open up, they discover strengths they didn't know they had. At its heart, this story is about family — both the ones we're born into and the ones we build — and the redemptive power of relationships. I hope it speaks to your own experiences of family, forgiveness, and the ways we grow when life throws us a curveball.

I'd love to hear your thoughts on the book and how the characters resonated with you. I'm always moved by the insights that readers bring to the story, and I'm especially honoured to hear from those who have navigated similar journeys with family and loved ones.

Thank you again for reading. I hope this book sparks rich discussion and that you enjoy your time with *Cattail Lane*.

Warmest regards,



Fran Kimmel
www.FranKimmel.com



Cattail Lane

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A story with a compassionate eye, the heartwarming vibes of *A Man Called Ove* mixed with the high emotional stakes of Anne Tyler, *Cattail Lane* is an uplifting family drama about overcoming the past and the extraordinary power of second chances

1

Cattail Lane has multiple narrators, but do you think there is a clear protagonist? Who do you think changes most over the course of the novel?

2

What impact does Sarah have on Billy and Nick's developing relationship, and how does she represent a different type of strength compared to Nick?

3

If you could have learned more about one character's backstory or future, who would you choose and why? Which character did you connect with the most, and why?

4

Did your views on the people in the dementia ward change over the course of the book? If so, why?

5

Grandma Evie is a central figure even though her dementia prevents us from fully understanding her perspective. How does her illness shape the relationships in the story? Do you have your own family experiences with dementia, and, if so, how has this affected your relationships?

6

Were you surprised by the identity of the thief at Prairie View? Did the revelation affect the way you saw her character?

7

Consider the sacrifices made by Nick, Billy, and Sarah. Do you think they found fulfillment or healing in what they gave up?

8

The Goose Lake wetlands are important to Nic. What do you think Goose Lake represents for Nick, and how does it tie into the themes of family and legacy in the book?

9

Do you believe that Nick, Billy, Sarah, and even Grandma Evie have formed a family by the end of the book? Why or why not?

10

The ending leaves some questions open regarding Nick's future and his relationships with Billy and Sarah. How did you interpret the final scenes? What future would you like for Nick and Sarah?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fran Kimmel is the award-winning author of numerous short stories, plays for both theatre and radio, and the novels *No Good Asking* and *The Shore Girl*. Her work explores the resilience and complexity of family bonds, capturing both the light and dark sides of caregiving, community, and small-town life. Born and raised in Calgary, Fran now lives in Lacombe, a small town in central Alberta, Canada. Formerly a communications consultant for both private companies and a regional public library system, Fran now writes full time. When not at her desk or on a walk through the woods, she leads Brave New Writing, a program for emerging writers eager to learn, grow, and share their unique voices.

