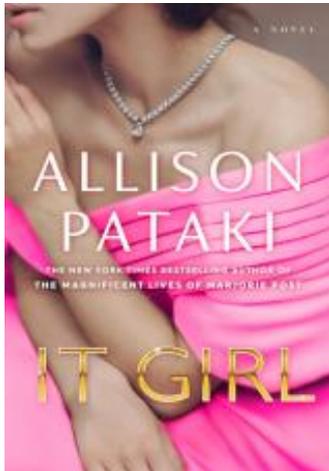


It Girl

by Allison Pataki



About the Book

A sweeping, sensational novel of America's first 'It Girl,' whose dramatic journey to center stage echoes through the decades --- from the *New York Times* bestselling author of *THE MAGNIFICENT LIVES OF MARJORIE POST*.

At the dawn of the 20th century, New York's streets teem with change: electricity, automobiles, the brash young President Teddy Roosevelt --- and the It Girls. As artists' muses and working models, these independent young women soar to stardom not because of their pedigrees or inherited wealth, but because of their talent, charisma and irresistible beauty. Pop culture is born, and in a world alight with Mr. Edison's new bulbs, no one shines brighter than America's sweetheart, Evelyn Talbot.

But the journey to stardom is not simple or straight. While working as a shopgirl, the young Evelyn is recruited as a studio model and soon catches the eye of the preeminent artists of the age. When Broadway comes calling, Evelyn solidifies her status as the first self-made American female celebrity: the iconic Gibson Girl, the most sought-after figure and face of her time.

Enter a parade of powerful and power-hungry men, from world-famous architect Stanley Pierce, the visionary behind Manhattan's mansions and iconic landmarks, to Hal Thorne, the shockingly wealthy railroad heir and premier 'playboy' of high society. Each man promises comfort, glamour, security --- even love. But fame and fortune are cruel teachers, and Evelyn learns that the only person she can rely on is herself.

When Evelyn finds herself at the center of a murder of passion declared 'the Crime of the Century,' she is blamed for the acts of the men in her life. In the media frenzy that spirals around her, Evelyn realizes that to survive, she will have to write her own ending. But can this artists' muse turned showgirl pull off the greatest act of her life?

IT GIRL is a breathtaking ride inspired by a singular artist and icon who captured the collective imagination of American society. Allison Pataki has crafted yet another unforgettable leading lady, a heroine who must find the power to change not only the world around her but her own destiny.

Discussion Guide

1. By telling her own story in retrospect, Evelyn claims narrative control. What do you think she most wants readers to understand about her life --- and about women like her?
2. How does the book peel back the glamour of elite New York society to reveal its moral contradictions, particularly in how it treats working-class women?
3. Evelyn repeatedly adopts roles --- onstage, in art studios, in her relationships, and in society. At what moments does she feel most herself, and when does she feel most trapped by the roles others assign her?
4. The novel suggests that fascination can quickly turn into manipulation or even the desire for possession. What does the book argue is the true cost of fame and adoration? Do we believe that pop culture builds up its icons simply to tear them down? Discuss that common recurring phenomenon.
5. Compare the men who "collect" Evelyn --- through paintings, jewels, marriage or reputation. How does the novel distinguish between being seen and being known?
6. Evelyn's mother is a complicated character. How would you characterize their relationship? Where do care and exploitation blur?
7. Characters like Leah, Violet, Penny and Dinah play crucial roles in Evelyn's survival. How do Evelyn's female friendships differ from her romantic relationships?
8. Where did you find yourself drawing parallels between Evelyn's world and modern celebrity culture and influencers?
9. How did the city of New York and this particular era play a role in Evelyn's story? What did you learn about New York City at the dawn of the 20th century from this book?
10. What do you think Evelyn and Penny do once they arrive in France? Imagine and discuss a possible "next act" for these characters.
11. Which were Evelyn's greatest strengths? Does your answer evolve as Evelyn grows over the course of this novel?
12. If you could ask author Allison Pataki one thing about writing IT GIRL, what would it be?

Author Bio

Allison Pataki is the *New York Times* bestselling author of THE TRAITOR'S WIFE, THE ACCIDENTAL EMPRESS, SISI, THE QUEEN'S FORTUNE, THE MAGNIFICENT LIVES OF MARJORIE POST and FINDING MARGARET FULLER and IT GIRL, as well as the memoir BEAUTY IN THE BROKEN PLACES. Her novels have been translated into more than 20 languages.

A former news writer and producer, Pataki has written for *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and other outlets. She has appeared on "Today," "Good Morning America," "Good Day New York" and MSNBC's "Morning Joe." Allison Pataki graduated cum laude from Yale University and lives in New York with her husband and family.

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