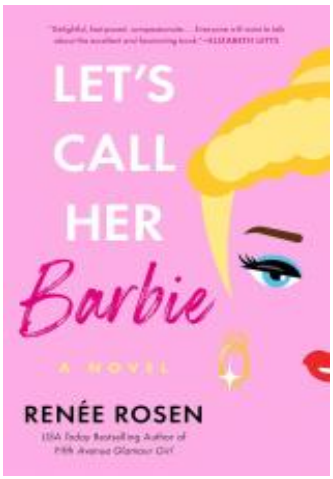
Let's Call Her Barbie

by Renée Rosen



About the Book

She was only 11 ½ inches tall, but she would change the world. Barbie is born in this bold new novel by *USA Today* bestselling author Renée Rosen.

When Ruth Handler walks into the boardroom of the toy company she co-founded and pitches her idea for a doll unlike any other, she knows what she?s setting in motion. It just might take the world a moment to catch up.

In 1956, the only dolls on the market for little girls let them pretend to be mothers. Ruth?s vision for a doll shaped like a grown woman and outfitted in an enviable wardrobe will let them dream they can be anything.

As Ruth assembles her team of creative rebels --- head engineer Jack Ryan, who hides his deepest secrets behind his genius, and designers Charlotte Johnson and Stevie Klein, whose hopes and dreams rest on the success of Barbie?s fashion --- she knows they?re working against a ticking clock to get this wild idea off the ground.

In the decades to come --- through soaring heights and devastating personal lows, public scandals and private tensions --- each of them will have to decide how tightly to hold on to their creation. Because Barbie has never been just a doll. She?s a legacy.

Discussion Guide

1. Despite Ruth?s intention to create a doll that would empower young girls, from the very beginning Barbie has been both celebrated and vilified. Do you think of Barbie as a feminist icon or a dangerous role model for women?

2. Throughout this novel, you get a behind-the-scenes look at the development and creation of Barbie. For example, you learned the real reasons why her waist is so tiny, her feet are so small, her neck is so long, etc. Barbie?s creators never

lost sight of the fact that she was just a plastic figurine with anatomically impossible body measurements. And yet some people thought they were supposed to look like her. What is it about Barbie that you think separates her from other dolls and toys and has this effect on people, both positive and negative?

3. Ruth was certainly a nontraditional woman for her time. She tried to have it all --- a husband, children and a career. What are your thoughts about her as a mother and her relationship with Barbara? How do you think her own childhood impacted her views on motherhood?

4. Jack Ryan was the unlikely Romeo of Mattel. What do you think it was about Jack that the women found so appealing and irresistible? What did you think about his relationship with Stevie? What did you think about Ruth and Seymour Rosenberg?s attempts to shortchange him on his royalties and phase him out of Mattel?

5. Growing Up Skipper came under fire --- rightfully so --- from the National Organization for Women as soon as she was released. Can you cite other Barbie controversies through the years? What do you think about the Barbie line today, which is based on diversity and inclusion, with a multitude of skin tones, hairstyles, body images and other more representative features?

6. Barbie has had more than 200 careers, from fashion model to astronaut. What do you think were the most important milestones for Barbie, and how was she ahead of her time?

7. How did you feel when you learned that Barbie was inspired by Bild Lilli, a German prostitute gag doll? Did that surprise you?

8. Ruth and Jack were both instrumental in the creation of Barbie. Ironically, they each had a Barbara in their lives and took credit for the name and the doll itself. After Jack?s tragic death, Ruth did a little revisionist history and downplayed if not erased his contributions to the doll?s success. Did you think Jack had a right to claim he created Barbie?

9. Ruth developed breast cancer in 1970, which led to the creation of her next enterprise, Nearly Me. She saw her prosthetic breasts as a way to help millions of breast cancer survivors. What did you think about her coming full circle in terms of her relationship with creating breasts for a doll for little girls and then creating breasts for grown women?

10. Ironically, many Barbie collectors say it?s because they weren?t allowed to have a Barbie when they were growing up that they became involved in collecting. Did you play with Barbies as a child, or did you shave off all her hair in a fit of protest? Were you allowed to have Barbies, or did your parents forbid you to play with ?that? doll?

Author Bio

Renée Rosen is a *USA Today* bestselling author. Her novels include LET'S CALL HER BARBIE, FIFTH AVENUE GLAMOUR GIRL, THE SOCIAL GRACES, PARK AVENUE SUMMER, WINDY CITY BLUES, WHITE COLLAR GIRL, WHAT THE LADY WANTS and DOLLFACE, as well as the young adult novel EVERY CROOKED POT.

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