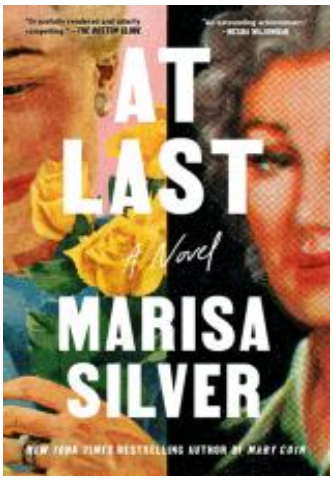
At Last

by Marisa Silver



About the Book

Set in mid-century America, AT LAST explores a rich family saga centered on two fierce and competitive matriarchs whose intertwined lives reflect the complexities of family, tradition and personal ambition.

Helene Simonauer and Evelyn Turner are two formidable women whose paths cross when their children marry. Both women are sharp, cunning and unwavering in their conflicting beliefs about marriage, responsibility and family and, most pressingly, their efforts to vie for the love of their shared granddaughter.

AT LAST paints a vivid portrait of the American Midwest, capturing the essence of a time and place where societal norms and personal aspirations often clashed. Marisa Silver?s narrative weaves together the lives of Helene and Evelyn, from their vastly different childhoods through the pivotal events that define them. Both intimate and expansive, and capturing the complexities of ambition and love with humor and insight, AT LAST is a testament to what happens when an unintended, even unwanted relationship turns out to be a central one that defines a life.

Discussion Guide

1. Why do Evelyn and Helene take such an immediate dislike to one another? How do you think their rivalry suggests deeper aspects of each one?s character?

2. Do you feel that the women change over the course of the novel? How? Can you pinpoint moments in the novel when their attitudes shift?

3. What does the novel have to say about the lives of women at different points during the 20th century?

4. Does Ruth?s story suggest a different way in which women began to think about their lives and identities and

possibilities? Contrast Evelyn and Helene?s developing sense of self with Ruth?s.

5. Why is Helene so threatened by Ruth? What does Ruth?s life have to say about the ways in which Helene accepted certain limitations in ways that Ruth does not?

6. The novel touches on different attitudes toward psychiatry and psychological awareness over time. Discuss how Evelyn and Ruth handled the loss of a husband and father versus how Francie?s psychological issues are handled.

7. What is the nature of female friendship as we age?

8. What does the title of the novel mean to you?

Author Bio

Marisa Silver is the author of the novels THE MYSTERIES; LITTLE NOTHING; MARY COIN, a *New York Times* bestseller and winner of the Southern California Independent Bookseller?s Award; THE GOD OF WAR, a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for Fiction; and NO DIRECTION HOME.

Her first collection of short stories, BABE IN PARADISE, was named a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year and was a *Los Angeles Times* Best Book of the Year. When her second collection, ALONE WITH YOU, was published, *The New York Times* called her ?one of California?s most celebrated contemporary writers.? Her fiction has been included in *The Best American Short Stories* and *The O. Henry Prize Stories*, as well as other anthologies.

She is a recipient of fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the Cullman Center for Scholars and writers. She lives in Los Angeles. AT LAST is her most recent novel.

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