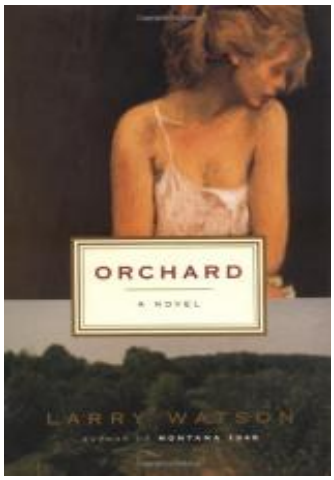
Orchard: A Novel

by Larry Watson



About the Book

From the bestselling author of **Montana 1948** comes the explosive story of an artist, his muse, and the staggering price they pay for their chance at immortality.

Ned Weaver, an internationally acclaimed painter, is famous in Door County, Wisconsin, for his luminous work?and for his affairs with his models. His wife, Harriet, has learned to accept these dalliances in the belief that his immense talent will ultimately make up for his shortcomings as a husband.

Sonja Skordahl, a Norwegian immigrant, came to America looking for a new life. Instead, she married Henry House, only to find herself defined, like so many other mid-twentieth-century women, by her roles as wife and mother. As circumstances and destiny land Sonja in Ned's studio, she becomes more than his model and more than an object of desire?she becomes the most inspiring muse Ned has ever known. When both Ned and Henry insist on possessing her, their jealousies threaten to erupt into violence, and Sonja must find a way to placate both men without sacrificing her hard-won sense of self.

With the stark, lyrical prose that Larry Watson is known for ("as fresh and clear as [a] trout stream" ?*The Washington Post Book World*) and vivid characters who seem to breathe on the page, **Orchard** explores the lives of four very different people bound together by beauty, art, obsession, and betrayal.

Discussion Guide

1. The author compares the novel's form to an Impressionist painting. Where do you think this idea comes from? Does the form work?

2. How might **Orchard**'s nonchronological form be justified? How would the novel change if it were structured

differently?

3. Much is made of possession and ownership in this novel; we see shifts in power among almost all of the characters. Discuss some of its manifestations or variations of the theme.

4. Why do you think Harriet Weaver stays with her husband? Do you understand her motivations? What would you do in her position?

5. Throughout **Orchard**, paintings are portrayed in vivid detail. How do these descriptions function in the novel?

6. It is clear that several of Watson's characters undergo emotionally draining experiences. How do these characters change over the course of the novel?

7. What does **Orchard** say about the responsibility of the artist? Ned Weaver has a very definite view on the matter. Are readers likely to share his opinion?

8. What inspires Sonja to pose for Weaver? Do you think her reasons change? Does she harbor any regrets about her decision?

9. Is it enough to say that Henry House is jealous that his wife is posing for Ned Weaver, or are his feelings more complex?

10. What are some of the different attitudes toward art in the novel? Toward artists?

11. Would you pose for an artist?

12. How is a muse different from a model?

Author Bio

Raised in Bismarck, North Dakota, Larry Watson is the author of 10 critically acclaimed books, including the bestselling MONTANA 1948. His fiction has been published internationally and has received numerous prizes and awards. His essays and book reviews have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and other periodicals. He and his wife live in Kenosha, Wisconsin. A film adaptation of Watson?s novel LET HIM GO with Kevin Costner and Diane Lane released in 2020.

Critical Praise

"Marvelous...Showing a deep maturity and craft, Watson surpasses himself in [**Orchard**]."

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