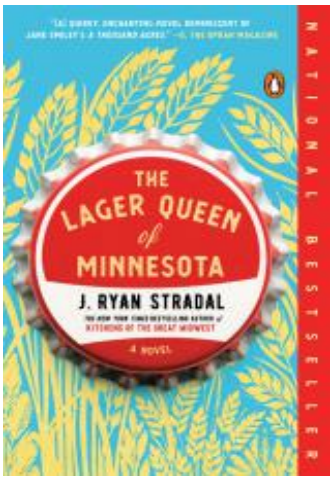
The Lager Queen of Minnesota

by J. Ryan Stradal



About the Book

A novel of family, Midwestern values, hard work, fate and the secrets of making a world-class beer, from the bestselling author of KITCHENS OF THE GREAT MIDWEST

Two sisters, one farm. A family is split when their father leaves their shared inheritance entirely to Helen, his younger daughter. Despite baking award-winning pies at the local nursing home, her older sister, Edith, struggles to make what most people would call a living. So she can't help wondering what her life would have been like with even a portion of the farm money her sister kept for herself.

With the proceeds from the farm, Helen builds one of the most successful light breweries in the country, and makes their company motto ubiquitous: "Drink lots. It's Blotz." Where Edith has a heart as big as Minnesota, Helen's is as rigid as a steel keg. Yet one day, Helen will find she needs some help herself, and she could find a potential savior close to home...if it's not too late.

Meanwhile, Edith's granddaughter, Diana, grows up knowing that the real world requires a tougher constitution than her grandmother possesses. She earns a shot at learning the IPA business from the ground up. Will that change their fortunes forever, and perhaps reunite her splintered family?

Here we meet a cast of lovable, funny, quintessentially American characters eager to make their mark in a world that's often stacked against them. In this deeply affecting family saga, resolution can take generations, but when it finally comes, we're surprised, moved and delighted.

Discussion Guide

1. At the center of the story is a family divided over an unfairly split inheritance. How do you feel about how each sister

reacted to their father?s decision? Did this situation evoke memories of lopsided inheritances or contested wills in your own family?

2. Helen instantly loves beer on her first taste and soon comes to the conclusion that she wants to be a brewer. How would you characterize her ambition? Does her relationship with Orval feel honest or calculated?

3. When we first meet Diana, she is stealing tools from garages and selling them on the internet to make money. In spite of this, how does she become a sympathetic character? What actions does she make that reveal her kindness and generosity?

4. Edith likes to think of herself as a simple person. Or does she? In what ways is she actually quite complicated? How does she reveal herself to be as calculating or focused as Helen?

5. Edith is convinced that her life would have been different had she received her half of the family farm. How would it have it been different? Consequently, how would Diana?s life have been different?

6. What do you think of the ?education? Frank Schabert gives Diana about brewing? Do you agree with his methods?

7. Each of the sisters experience the loss of a beloved husband. How are they different in how they express their grief? How are they similar?

8. The relationships within the book, as in life, necessarily evolve and adapt as time passes. How do you feel about Diana and Clarissa?s friendship, and the reasons they grew apart?

9. If there was one more chapter after the final scene, what do you imagine might happen?

10. Who do you feel is the ?lager queen of Minnesota,? if anyone?

Author Bio

J. Ryan Stradal is the author of *New York Times* bestseller KITCHENS OF THE GREAT MIDWEST and national bestseller THE LAGER QUEEN OF MINNESOTA. His writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, *Granta*, *The Rumpus* and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. His debut, KITCHENS OF THE GREAT MIDWEST, won the American Booksellers Association Indie?s Choice Award for Adult Debut Book of the Year. His latest novel is SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE LAKESIDE SUPPER CLUB. Born and raised in Minnesota, he now lives in California with his family.

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