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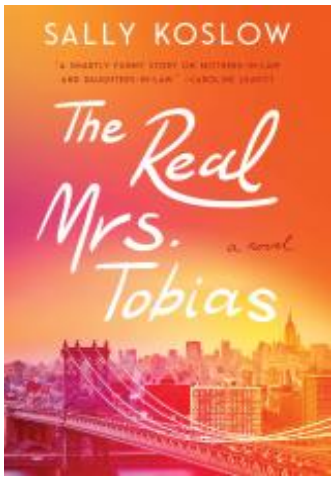
The Real Mrs. Tobias

by Sally Koslow



About the Book

A sharply funny and big-hearted multigenerational story about the deeply complicated relationships between mothers- and daughters-in-law, told through three women who marry into the same family --- a treat for fans of THE NEST and FLEISCHMANN IS IN TROUBLE.

It?s 2015 in New York City, and three women all known as Mrs. Tobias --- Veronika, the matriarch; her daughter-in-law, Mel; and Mel?s daughter-in-law, Birdie --- are trying to navigate personal difficulties, some of which are with one another. Veronika and Mel, despite having little in common, are both psychotherapists who are more skilled at helping other people than solving their own problems. Birdie, still dealing with the culture shock of moving to New York City and marrying into the Tobias clan, is pushed to her limit when her husband gets into trouble. No amount of badgering from his steely grandmother, smart-mouthed mother or disillusioned wife can convince him to own up to what he?s done.

Overwhelmed, Birdie bolts --- along with the couple?s young daughter --- to her Midwestern hometown, hoping that space, warmth and wisdom from her own feisty grandmother will help her find a path forward. And though Birdie begins to find comfort in unexpected places --- a local bookstore and the arms of her old boyfriend --- her absence stirs up long-simmering troubles back home forcing the Tobiases to reconsider their relationships to each other and, ultimately, what it means to be a family.

Will the three Tobias-women-by-marriage ever find themselves --- and a way back to one another? THE REAL MRS. TOBIAS is a timely look at how women hold families together.

Discussion Guide

1. Micah?s accident kickstarts THE REAL MRS. TOBIAS?s action. How might he have responded differently to this event? Do you feel any character gives him good advice?

2. Who is the better mother-in-law, Veronika or Mel? The better daughter-in-law, Mel or Birdie? Would you suggest that either one modify her behavior? Who do you think is the best mother in the book: Veronika, Mel, Birdie, Luanne or Joy-Ellen?

3. Culture clash is an underlying issue in the marriage of Birdie and Micah. Have you observed that this is a common problem in intermarriages? How is it best resolved?

4. Which relationship do you feel is trickier: mothers and sons, or mothers and daughters?

5. Does Mel?s relationship with her daughter, Jordan, differ from the one she maintains with her son, Micah? Who seems closer to her daughter, Mel or Luanne?

6. Is Mel an effective psychotherapist? Why or why not?

7. Both Mel and Birdie had children at what currently is considered to be a young age in the United States. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages to early parenthood versus later parenthood?

8. The Tobias and Peterson families illustrate different approaches to involvement in the lives of adult children. Which family strikes you as closer, the Tobiases or the Petersons?

9. When Delia suffers injuries from an accident, Norah, her employer, assumes support --- financial and emotional --- for her care. Do you agree with Norah?s husband and mother-in-
law that she oversteps boundaries?

10. For which family, Tobias or Peterson, does religion strike you as being more central to identity?

11. In Veronika?s position, would you share a difficult medical diagnosis with your spouse?

12. Mel agrees to meet with Dr. T. What is her motivation? Do you feel this meeting shows good judgment?

13. Do you agree with Mel that it?s preferable for Jordan and her baby to share a biological connection?

14. Which role do you think women find more rewarding, grandmother or mother?

15. Which role do you think is the trickiest, being a mother-in-law or a daughter-in-law?

16. Do you think that expectations for the roles of mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law have changed over time?

17. In your experience, do you believe that mothers-in-law are unfairly criticized?

18. Describe the lives of the characters a year after THE REAL MRS. TOBIAS ends.

Author Bio

Sally Koslow is the author of the novel THE REAL MRS. TOBIAS, as well as the novels ANOTHER SIDE OF PARADISE; the international bestseller THE LATE, LAMENTED MOLLY MARX; THE WIDOW WALTZ; WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE; and LITTLE PINK SLIPS. She is also the author of one work of nonfiction, SLOUCHING TOWARD ADULTHOOD: How to Let Go So Your Kids Can Grow Up. Her books have been published in a dozen countries.

Sally is the former editor-in-chief of iconic *McCall?s* Magazine. She has taught creative writing at the Writing Institute at Sarah Lawrence College and the JCC of Manhattan, as well as in private workshops. She has contributed essays and articles to *The New York Times, O, Real Simple* and too many other magazines to list, newspapers and websites, as well as numerous anthologies. Sally has lectured at Yale, Columbia, New York University, Wesleyan University, and the University of Chicago, as well as many libraries, community and synagogue groups, and the F. Scott Fitzgerald Society?s international conference in Toulouse, France.

Sally lives in Manhattan, but hopes the statute of limitations never ends on mentioning that she is from Fargo, North Dakota. She is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she met her husband. They live in Manhattan and are the proud parents of two sons.

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