Valley of the Moms

by Hannah Selinger



About the Book

?Stepford Wives? meets ?Big Little Lies? in this twisty thriller that uncovers the untruths, petty grievances and local school politics underneath a seemingly quaint small town.

Hamilton, Massachusetts is one of those suburban towns that appears untouched by the outside world where stay-at-home moms wear 2ct diamond studs to the playground, where a million-dollar property is ?affordable,? and where the Parent Teacher Organization is a hotbed of controversy. Sure, some people struggle to make ends meet, but residents would say discussing such ugly matters is impolite. Hamilton has been like this forever, and everyone likes it that way. Or: almost everyone.

It's not that Anna Plummer doesn't like Hamilton, but she never thought she'd be married with two young kids, comfortable, complacent?and growing more bored by the minute. So when she realizes her second grader won't be able to attend the "Ziti with Your Sweetie? school dance because she didn?t pay for a ?Premium? membership, she snaps. She sends an email to the terrifying president of the PTO --- and all hell breaks loose.

One year later, Anna is found dead in the frozen Ipswich River. Left to pick up the pieces, her husband, Denny, is shaken to his core. He's no expert, but he's seen enough ?Dateline? to know that the police think he's the main suspect. If they aren't going to get justice for Anna, he will.

Told through the alternating perspectives of Anna and Denny exactly one year apart, and with a shocking concluding twist, VALLEY OF THE MOMS is a gripping look at the underpinnings of grief, the social structures of wealth, and the secrets people keep --- even among friends and loved ones.

Discussion Guide

Please note: This guide contains significant spoilers for VALLEY OF THE MOMS.

1. VALLEY OF THE MOMS is written with dual perspectives and timelines. How did this impact your reading? How would your understanding of Denny change if we only saw Anna?s perspective, and vice versa?

2. How does setting inform the plot in VALLEY OF THE MOMS?

3. VALLEY OF THE MOMS opens with Anna's body being found. What was the effect of this opening? Why might the author have chosen to start there?

4. How do wealth and loyalty intersect in VALLEY OF THE MOMS? Consider how the residents of Hamilton interact with the world and people around them.

5. What surprised you most about the ending? Who, in your opinion, most betrayed Anna?

6. Outside of our protagonists --- Anna and Denny --- which character felt most compelling to you?

7. At the end of our story, Denny decides to stay in Hamilton. What do you make of this choice? Would you have done the same?

8. Anna's story was inspired by real events in the author's life. Do you see echoes of your own life experiences in VALLEY OF THE MOMS?

Author Bio

Hannah Selinger is a James Beard Award-nominated lifestyle writer and mother of two based in Boxford, MA. She is the author of the novel VALLEY OF THE MOMS and the memoir CELLAR RAT: My Life in the Restaurant Underbelly. Her print and digital work has appeared in the *New York Times* Magazine, the *Boston Globe*, the *Washington Post*, Eater, *Travel + Leisure*, *Food & Wine*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, and elsewhere. Her 2021 *Bon Appétit* essay, ?In My Childhood Kitchen, I Learned Both Fear and Love,? is anthologized in the 2022 *Best American Food Writing* collection.

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