



The Woman Upstairs (Vintage Contemporaries)

By Claire Messud

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A *New York Times* Book Review Notable Book • A *Washington Post* Top Ten Book of the Year • A *Chicago Tribune* Noteworthy Book • A *Huffington Post* Best Book • A *Boston Globe* Best Book of the Year • A *Kirkus* Best Fiction Book • A Goodreads Best Book

Nora Eldridge is a reliable, but unremarkable, friend and neighbor, always on the fringe of other people's achievements. But the arrival of the Shahid family—dashing Skandar, a Lebanese scholar, glamorous Sirena, an Italian artist, and their son, Reza—draws her into a complex and exciting new world. Nora's happiness pushes her beyond her boundaries, until Sirena's careless ambition leads to a shattering betrayal. Told with urgency, intimacy, and piercing emotion, this *New York Times* bestselling novel is the riveting confession of a woman awakened, transformed, and abandoned by a desire for a world beyond her own.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of the Month, May 2013: If this ferocious novel were to have a subtitle, it would be: *No More Ms. Nice Guy*. "How angry am I? You don't want to know. Nobody wants to know about that," barks Nora Eldridge, our 42-year-old protagonist, an aesthete-wannabe who has slid into the bourgeois suburban life of a schoolteacher. Solipsistically lonely, Nora befriends--a polite term here for what is more like "stalks"--the artist-mother of one of her students; she also insinuates herself into the life of the woman's husband. That trouble will ensue is obvious to everyone but Nora, who for all her paranoia, is stunningly blind about using and being used. But in the end, maybe Nora doesn't even care what she has suffered; at least, for once, she has *lived*, as she will continue to do in the minds of all of us who've read about her.

--Sara Nelson

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review In this acid bath of a novel, the superlative Messud (*The Emperor's Children*, 2006) immolates an iconic figure—the good, quiet, self-sacrificing woman—with exhilarating velocity, fury, and wit while taking on the vicissitudes of family life and the paradoxes of art. Nora, our archly funny, venomous, and raging 42-year-old narrator, recounts her thirty-seventh year, when she was living alone and teaching third grade in Boston after the death of her profoundly frustrated mother. Nora longs to make art but hasn't mustered the necessary conviction. Enter the Paris-based Shahids. Reza, her new student, is a magnet for bullies stirred up by post-9/11 xenophobia. His Palestinian Lebanese father, Skandar, is a prominent academic spending a year at Harvard. His Italian mother, Sirena, is an artist in need of a studio and a studio mate. She promptly recruits Nora. A confident and passionate conduit for mythological powers, Sirena creates “lush gardens and jungles made out of household items and refuse.” Unworldly and lonely Nora, a veritable daughter of Ibsen, builds dollhouses—small, painstakingly accurate replicas of the rooms occupied by women artists ranging from Emily Dickinson to Edie Sedgwick. Messud's scorching social anatomy, red-hot psychology, galvanizing story, and incandescent language make for an all-circuits-firing novel about enthrallment, ambition, envy, and betrayal. A tour de force portraying a no longer invisible or silent “woman upstairs.” --Donna Seaman

From Bookforum

If I have sounded like an equivocal admirer of Messud's until now, let me hereby announce my full conversion to fandom with her latest novel, *The Woman Upstairs*. For one thing, it is something none of her other fiction has been, which is an absolute page-turner, from its grab-you-by-the-collar opening--"How angry am I? You don't want to know. Nobody wants to know about *that*"--to its final rumination on the creative uses of anger: "a great boil of rage like the sun's fire in me." For another, it may well be the first truly feminist (in the best, least didactic sense) novel I have read in ages--the novel candid about sex and the intricacies of female desire that Virginia Woolf hoped someone would write, given a room and income of her own. *The Woman Upstairs* takes on, at full throttle, the ways in which women are socialized into being accomodating "nice girls" and the ruthlessness--the "myopia"--that is necessary to pursue artistic ambition. It shows Claire Messud at the height of her considerable powers, articulating the quandary of being alive and sentient, covetous and confused in the twenty-first century. *The Woman Upstairs* is an extraordinary novel, a psychological suspense story of the highest sort that will leave you thinking about its implications for days afterward. --Daphne Merkin

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Larry Jones:

Now a day people that Living in the era where everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources in it can be true or not involve people to be aware of each info they get. How people have to be smart in acquiring any information nowadays? Of course the correct answer is reading a book. Studying a book can help men and women out of this uncertainty Information particularly this The Woman Upstairs (Vintage Contemporaries) book as this book offers you rich details and knowledge. Of course the knowledge in this book hundred per cent guarantees there is no doubt in it you probably know this.

Albert Guerra:

The experience that you get from The Woman Upstairs (Vintage Contemporaries) is the more deep you searching the information that hide in the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to understand but The Woman Upstairs (Vintage Contemporaries) giving you thrill feeling of reading. The writer conveys their point in selected way that can be understood by anyone who read it because the author of this publication is well-known enough. This book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. So it is easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having this particular The Woman Upstairs (Vintage Contemporaries) instantly.

Virginia Benson:

The book untitled The Woman Upstairs (Vintage Contemporaries) contain a lot of information on the item. The writer explains the girl idea with easy approach. The language is very clear to see all the people, so do certainly not worry, you can easy to read it. The book was written by famous author. The author will bring you in the new period of time of literary works. You can read this book because you can read on your smart phone, or product, so you can read the book in anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can open up their official web-site along with order it. Have a nice read.

Keith Mayo:

On this era which is the greater man or woman or who has ability in doing something more are more precious than other. Do you want to become among it? It is just simple method to have that. What you have to do is just spending your time almost no but quite enough to get a look at some books. Among the books in the top checklist in your reading list will be The Woman Upstairs (Vintage Contemporaries). This book that is qualified as The Hungry Slopes can get you closer in growing to be precious person. By looking way up and review this publication you can get many advantages.

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