

[PDF] City Of Light

Lauren Belfer - pdf download free book



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Author: Lauren Belfer
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Description:

City of Light is quite simply electrifying. Not that there's anything simple about this rich novel, which is first and foremost an examination of illusion, invisibility, and power--physical and personal. Set in the spring of 1901, as preparations for the Pan-American Exposition would seem to promise Buffalo, New York, a permanent place in the world, Lauren Belfer's book is narrated by the never-married headmistress of a fashionable girls' school. At 36, Louisa Barrett does her best to free her charges from their societal shackles. "I'm rather ashamed of all the things I've been able to give my students through the subterfuge of training them to be better wives," she says proudly. What Louisa is most concerned about, however, is her 9-year-old goddaughter, Grace Sinclair, who has grown

increasingly unstable since her mother's sudden death. Meanwhile, Grace's father is heading up Buffalo's hydroelectric power plans with dangerous zeal--much to the chagrin of local conservationists who oppose any exploitation of Niagara Falls. Will Tom's intensity, which smacks of fanaticism, extend so far as murder?

But this offers only the barest idea of Belfer's complex grid. In 500 fast pages, she creates a fascinating, disquieting world in which nothing is what it seems. As Louisa battles against her instinct for self-preservation, her past--particularly a vile encounter with the corpulent Grover Cleveland--threatens to undermine her carefully created persona and loose her greatest secret. Looking back on the events of 1901 from the safety (and disappointment) of 1909, Louisa is the most astringent and intriguing of narrators. To Lauren Belfer's endless credit, *City of Light* is panoramic, subtle, and very physical. In her first novel, she makes us feel the rush of water, the thrill of light, the snap, crackle, and pop of social tension, and--alas for Louisa--the despair of tragic inevitability. --*Sophie Atherton* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly A gift for social nuance and for authoritatively controlled narration shapes this compelling debut, which sets one young woman's extraordinary fate against the backdrop of the political struggles over the burgeoning electric industry as it began to harness the power of Niagara Falls at the turn of this century. Louisa Barrett, headmistress of a prestigious girls' seminary in Buffalo, N.Y., operates in the city's social circles with a freedom generally not accorded to other women. People assume her to be "without passion or experience," she observes, and she proceeds to tell her story with the clarity and restraint of a Jane Austen heroine. Louisa gradually reveals the great secret and sorrow of her life: having been raped by a high-powered politician (readers will gasp at the implications of his identity), Louisa secretly gave birth to a daughter nine years earlier, and arranged for the baby's adoption by her best friend, Margaret Sinclair, who has recently died. When Louisa visits her daughter Grace's father, Tom Sinclair, the idealistic businessman spearheading the building of the newest powerhouse at the Falls, she overhears an exchange between Tom and a famous engineer that arouses suspicion when the first of two murders of power company engineers occurs soon afterward. The city is embroiled in a battle between environmental preservationists protesting the diversion of Niagara's waters, and industrialists inspired by the benefits of electricity, and Louisa begins to understand the desperate measures to which each side will resort. Meanwhile, she is poised for a time to choose between two men: a prominent reporter who falls in love with her, and Tom, marriage to whom would make her legally Grace's mother. Belfer's delineation of society's power structure, deftly portrayed in the controversy over the Falls and the city fathers' preparations for the Pan-American Exposition, undergird a many-layered zinger of a conclusion. The rich mix of fictional and historical figures includes a family from Buffalo's black middle class, presidents Cleveland and McKinley, and immigrant power-station workers who risk life and limb. With the assurance of an established writer, Belfer delivers a work of depth and polishAan unsentimentalized story complete with dangerous liaisons, gorgeous descriptions of the Falls and a central character whose voice is irresistible to the last page of her tragic story. \$200,000 ad/promo; BOMC main selection; simultaneous BDD audio; author tour; foreign rights sold in U.K., Germany, Italy, France and Sweden. (May) FYI: Belfer has been selected for B&N's Discover New Writers program.

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