



Dissident Gardens: A Novel (Vintage Contemporaries)

Jonathan Lethem

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A dazzling novel from one of our finest writers—an epic yet intimate family saga about three generations of all-American radicals

At the center of Jonathan Lethem's superb new novel stand two extraordinary women: Rose Zimmer, the aptly nicknamed Red Queen of Sunnyside, Queens, is an unreconstructed Communist who savages neighbors, family, and political comrades with the ferocity of her personality and the absolutism of her beliefs. Her precocious and willful daughter, Miriam, equally passionate in her activism, flees Rose's influence to embrace the dawning counterculture of Greenwich Village.

These women cast spells over the men in their lives: Rose's aristocratic German Jewish husband, Albert; her cousin, the feckless chess hustler Lenny Angrush; Cicero Lookins, the brilliant son of her black cop lover; Miriam's (slightly fraudulent) Irish folksinging husband, Tommy Gogan; their bewildered son, Sergius. Flawed and idealistic, Lethem's characters struggle to inhabit the utopian dream in an America where radicalism is viewed with bemusement, hostility, or indifference.

As the decades pass—from the parlor communism of the '30s, McCarthyism, the civil rights movement, ragged '70s communes, the romanticization of the Sandinistas, up to the Occupy movement of the moment—we come to understand through Lethem's extraordinarily vivid storytelling that the personal may be political, but the political, even more so, is personal.

Lethem's characters may pursue their fates within History with a capital *H*, but his novel is—at its mesmerizing, beating heart—about love.

From the Hardcover edition.

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