



The Almost Moon

By Alice Sebold

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A woman steps over the line into the unthinkable in this brilliant, powerful, and unforgettable new novel by the author of *The Lovely Bones* and *Lucky*.

For years Helen Knightly has given her life to others: to her haunted mother, to her enigmatic father, to her husband and now grown children. When she finally crosses a terrible boundary, her life comes rushing in at her in a way she never could have imagined. Unfolding over the next twenty-four hours, this searing, fast-paced novel explores the complex ties between mothers and daughters, wives and lovers, the meaning of devotion, and the line between love and hate. It is a challenging, moving, gripping story, written with the fluidity and strength of voice that only Alice Sebold can bring to the page.

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The Almost Moon By Alice Sebold Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Sebold's disappointing second novel (after much-lauded *The Lovely Bones*) opens with the narrator's statement that she has killed her mother. Helen Knightly, herself the mother of two daughters and an art class model old enough to be the mother of the students who sketch her nude figure, is the dutiful but resentful caretaker for her senile 88-year-old mother, Clair. One day, traumatized by the stink of Clair's voided bowels and determined to bathe her, Helen succumbs to a life-long dream and smothers Clair, who had sucked the life out of [Helen] day by day, year by year. After dragging Clair's corpse into the cellar and phoning her ex-husband to confess her crime, Helen has sex with her best friend's 30-year-old blond-god doofus son. Jumping between past and present, Sebold reveals the family's fractured past (insane, agoraphobic mother; tormented father, dead by suicide) and creates a portrait of Clair that resembles Sebold's own mother as portrayed in her memoir, *Lucky*. While Helen has clearly suffered at her mother's hands, the matricide is woefully contrived, and Helen's handling of the body and her subsequent actions seem almost slapstick. Sebold can write, that's clear, but her sophomore effort is not in line with her talent. (Oct.)

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Since Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones* (****1/2 Nov/Dec 2002) was a runaway hit, critics inevitably compared that poignant tale of a murdered teenage girl to this long-awaited, brooding account of a woman pushed to tragic extremes. Some critics praised Sebold's evocative writing and bleak depiction of family relationships in the shadow of mental illness, but the majority of critics complained that the characters were wholly unsympathetic, their decisions and actions incomprehensible, and the plot implausible. Some of the discord may result from *Moon's* ugly subject matter and the natural compassion elicited by the young murder victim in *The Lovely Bones* (as opposed to the cold-blooded Helen). Sebold's fans may want to skip this one.

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From [Booklist](#)

In her highly anticipated second novel, after the groundbreaking *The Lovely Bones* (2002), Sebold strikes two notes: grim and grimmer. Within pages, Helen, a middle-aged, depressed divorcée, kills her elderly mother; she spends the next 24 hours reliving her miserable childhood and her attempts to break free of it, coming to the realization that she "had seen the yawning tide that was her mother's need and fallen in." It's not until Helen reaches high school that she realizes her mother is mentally ill, her father is emotionally absent, and her primary purpose is to be her mother's "proxy in the world and to bring that world back home." Although she eventually marries and has two children, moving far away in what she hoped would be "the geographical cure," she ends up divorced and living blocks from her childhood home. With an unwavering focus and detached, downbeat prose, Sebold follows Helen on her seemingly inevitable psychological descent. The result is an emotionally raw novel that is, at times, almost too painful to read, yet Sebold stays remarkably true to her vision, bringing readers close to a flawed woman who lives in a very narrow world, one full of duty, obligation, and pain. Sebold brings to the portrait such honesty and empathy that many will find their own dark impulses reflected here; however, it is so unremittingly bleak that it seems unlikely that it will be greeted with the same enthusiasm as her debut. Wilkinson, Joanne

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Tammy Crider:

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