



# The Woman Upstairs (Vintage Contemporaries)

*Claire Messud*

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From the *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Emperor's Children*, a masterly new novel: the riveting confession of a woman awakened, transformed and betrayed by a desire for a world beyond her own.

Nora Eldridge, an elementary school teacher in Cambridge, Massachusetts, long ago compromised her dream to be a successful artist, mother and lover. She has instead become the “woman upstairs,” a reliable friend and neighbor always on the fringe of others’ achievements. Then into her life arrives the glamorous and cosmopolitan Shahids—her new student Reza Shahid, a child who enchants as if from a fairy tale, and his parents: Skandar, a dashing Lebanese professor who has come to Boston for a fellowship at Harvard, and Sirena, an effortlessly alluring Italian artist.

When Reza is attacked by schoolyard bullies, Nora is drawn deep into the complex world of the Shahid family; she finds herself falling in love with them, separately and together. Nora’s happiness explodes her boundaries, and she discovers in herself an unprecedented ferocity—one that puts her beliefs and her sense of self at stake.

Told with urgency, intimacy and piercing emotion, this brilliant novel of passion and artistic fulfillment explores the intensity, thrill—and the devastating cost—of embracing an authentic life.

This ebook edition includes a Reading Group Guide.

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