



After Long Silence: A Memoir

Helen Fremont

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Helen Fremont was raised Roman Catholic in America, only to discover in adulthood that her parents were Jews who had survived the Holocaust. Delving into the extraordinary secrets that held her family together in a bond of silence for more than forty years, she recounts with heartbreaking clarity and candor a remarkable tale of survival, as vivid as fiction but with the eloquence of truth.

When Helen was small, her mother taught her the sign of the cross in six languages. Theirs was the tender conspiracy of a little girl and her mother at bedtime, protected by a God who could respond in any language. What she didn't understand was that she was being equipped with proof of her Catholicism, a hedge against persecution, real or imagined.

It wasn't until adulthood that she began to comprehend the terrible irony of her mother's gesture, as she and her sister discovered their parents' remarkable, long-held secret. She knew that her father had spent six years in the Siberian Gulag, surviving nearly on will alone; that her mother's elder sister, fearless and proud, had married an Italian Fascist whose title and connections helped them to survive during the war. But their faith, their legacy as Jews, was kept hidden for decades.

After Long Silence is a searching inquiry into the meaning of identity, self, and history. It's about the devastating price of hiding the truth; about the steps we take, foolish or wise, to protect ourselves and our loved ones. No one who reads this book can be left unmoved, or fail to understand the seductive, damaging power of secrets.

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