



The Mare: A Novel

Mary Gaitskill

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Following her National Book Award–nominated *Veronica*, here is Mary Gaitskill’s most poignant and powerful work yet—the story of a Dominican girl, the Anglo woman who introduces her to riding, and the horse who changes everything for her.

Velveteen Vargas is eleven years old, a Fresh Air Fund kid from Brooklyn. Her host family is a couple in upstate New York: Ginger, a failed artist and shakily recovered alcoholic, and her academic husband, Paul, who wonder what it will mean to “make a difference” in such a contrived situation. Gaitskill illuminates their shifting relationship with Velvet over several years, as well as Velvet’s encounter with the horses at the stable down the road—especially with an abused, unruly mare called Fugly Girl. With strong supporting characters—Velvet’s abusive mother, an eccentric horse trainer, a charismatic older boy who awakens Velvet’s nascent passion—*The Mare* traces Velvet’s journey between the vital, violent world of the inner city and the world of the small-town stable.

In Gaitskill’s hands, the timeless story of a girl and a horse is joined with a timely story of people from different races and classes trying to meet one another honestly. *The Mare* is raw, heart-stirring, and original.

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