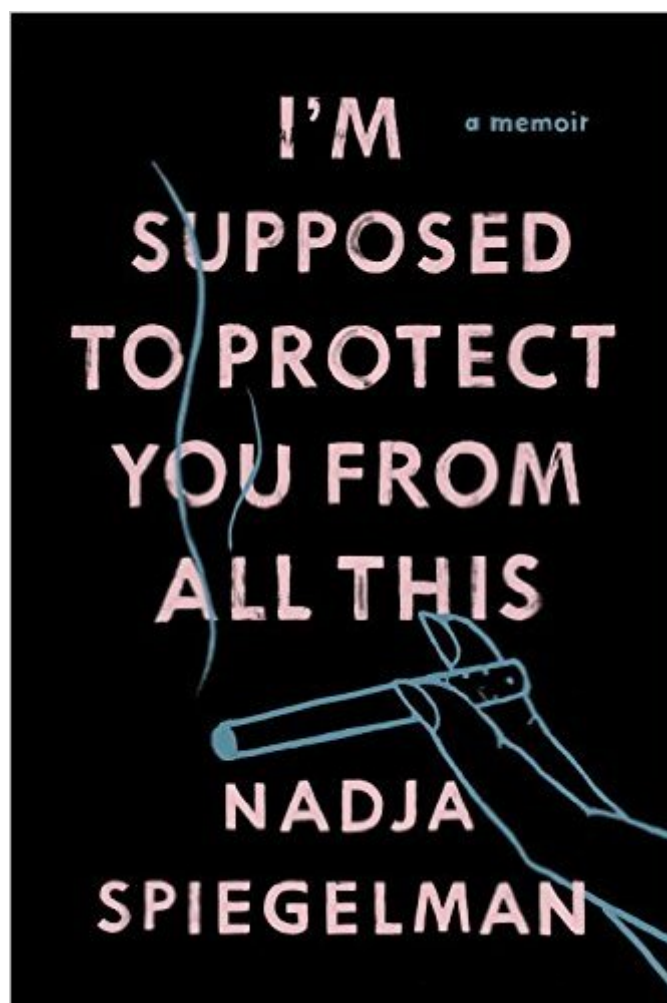


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I'm Supposed To Protect You From All This: A Memoir



Synopsis

"What Ferrante did for female friendsâexploring the tumult and complexity their relationships could holdâSpiegelman sets out to do for mothers and daughters. Sheâs essentially written *My Brilliant Mom*."âSlate

A memoir of mothers and daughtersâand mothers as daughtersâtraced through four generations, from Paris to New York and back again. For a long time, Nadja Spiegelman believed her mother was a fairy. More than her famous father, *Maus* creator Art Spiegelman, and even more than most mothers, hersâFrench-born New Yorker art director FranÃ§oise Moulyâexerted a force over reality that was both dazzling and daunting. As Nadjaâs body changed and she began to whisper to the adults around me in a language I did not understand, their relationship grew tense. Unwittingly, they were replaying a drama from her motherâs past, a drama Nadja sensed but had never been told. Then, after college, her mother suddenly opened up to her. FranÃ§oise recounted her turbulent adolescence caught between a volatile mother and a playboy father, one of the first plastic surgeons in France. The weight of the difficult stories she told her daughter shifted the balance between them.

It had taken an ocean to allow FranÃ§oise the distance to become her own person. At about the same age, Nadja made the journey in reverse, moving to Paris determined to get to know the woman her mother had fled. Her grandmotherâs memories contradicted her motherâs at nearly every turn, but beneath them lay a difficult history of her own. Nadja emerged with a deeper understanding of how each generation reshapes the past in order to forge ahead, their narratives both weapon and defense, eternally in conflict. Every reader will recognize herself and her family in this gorgeous and heartbreaking memoir, which helps us to see why sometimes those who love us best hurt us most.

Book Information

Hardcover: 384 pages

Publisher: Riverhead Books (August 2, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1594631921

ISBN-13: 978-1594631924

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 1.2 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (12 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #45,539 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #285 in Books > Biographies &

Customer Reviews

“My mother wasn’t perfect. My mother was intense. Things didn’t happen because they were possible, they happened because she decided they would. But, as anyone who has read a fairytale knows, all spells come with a cost. The magic pulled on hidden sources. She could set the universe aflame, but she used herself as fuel. Somewhere inside, the earth was scorched.”

I’m Supposed To Protect You From All This is a memoir by American graphic novelist and author, Nadja Spiegelman. Nadja is the daughter of cartoonist Art Spiegelman (author of the graphic novel *Maus*) and Francoise Mouly (art editor of the *New Yorker* since 1993), and this memoir is dedicated to her mother and grandmother. Nadja decides to write about her mother’s coming of age: the process, naturally enough, requires input from her mother, Francoise, and her maternal grandmother, Josée, who had a career as a ghostwriter. “My mother did not agree right away. She thought about it carefully. And then, having decided, she held nothing back. The boundaries between us fell, and fell suddenly. She let me in. There was nothing I couldn’t ask. She answered me with a searching honesty rare even in the privacy of one’s own thoughts. She made time for me in her crowded life.”

At times, the narrative from Francoise’s perspective is so intimate, the reader can be forgiven for thinking that the words are Nadja’s: “Don’t talk back to me,” Josée replied. She was capable of saying things so terrible they blacked out the sun. “No one will ever love a girl like you,” she might say. “How could you expect them to? A disagreeable, insolent, unpleasant girl like you?” The words shot darkness over Francoise’s future and blotted out all hope. She was miserable. She would always be miserable.

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