

GOLDENSEAL

READING GROUP GUIDE

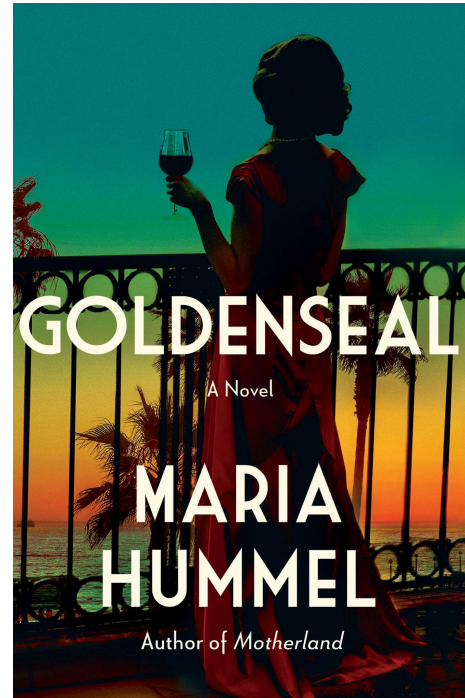
by Maria Hummel

About the Book

A Gentleman in Moscow meets *My Brilliant Friend* in this novel of two estranged friends who reunite to confront each other and the devastating betrayal that tore them apart

Downtown Los Angeles, 1990. Alone in her luxury hotel suite, the reclusive Lacey Crane receives a message: Edith is waiting for her in the lobby. Former best friends, Lacey and Edith haven't spoken to one another in over four decades.

As young adults meeting at summer camp in Maine, and later making their way in the glitzy spotlight of postwar Hollywood, Edith and Lacey share a deep-rooted bond that once saved them from isolation and despair, providing comfort from the public and private traumas that they had each endured and which a newly optimistic world was eager to forget. Told through a continuous, twisting conversation that unfolds over the course of a single evening, in which each woman tells her story and reveals long-hidden secrets, the narratives of Edith and Lacey burn with atmosphere, mystery, resentment, and regret.



About the Author

Maria Hummel is a novelist and poet. Her novel, *Still Lives*, was a Reese Witherspoon x Hello Sunshine Book Club pick, Book of the Month Club pick, and *BBC Culture Best Book of 2018*, and has been optioned for television and translated into multiple languages. She is also the author of *Lesson in Red*; *Motherland*, a *San Francisco Chronicle* Book of the Year; and *House and Fire*, winner of the APR/Honickman Poetry Prize. She has worked and taught at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Stanford University; and the University of Vermont. She lives in Vermont with her husband and sons.

"Radiant . . . *Goldenseal* provides plenty of golden moments, an elixir for these times." —Gordon Dossett, *Manchester Journal*

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Discussion Questions

1. Did you relate to Lacey or to Edith more as you read the novel? Did your perspective on them change throughout the book?
2. *Goldenseal* moves through several time periods and settings. Was one part your favorite? What about it worked for you?
3. What do you think would be the hardest part about reconnecting with someone important after more than 40 years?
4. Do you think it was ultimately that a man came between them, or was it something else?
5. Do you agree with Edith that people grow up many times? Why or why not?
6. The blue bottle that Edith gave to Lacey: why do you think Lacey never drank what was inside? Or do you think she did?
7. How do you think religion and culture impacted these characters and their families?
8. Fairy tales appear throughout the book. What connections do you see between the fairy tales and Edith and Lacey's life stories?
9. Maria Hummel was inspired by Sándor Márai's *Embers*, which follows two men after a friendship estrangement. How do you think *Goldenseal* might have been different if it weren't about women? How might it be different if it were about two women growing up now?
10. Did the book cause you to reexamine any old friendships or fights from your past?