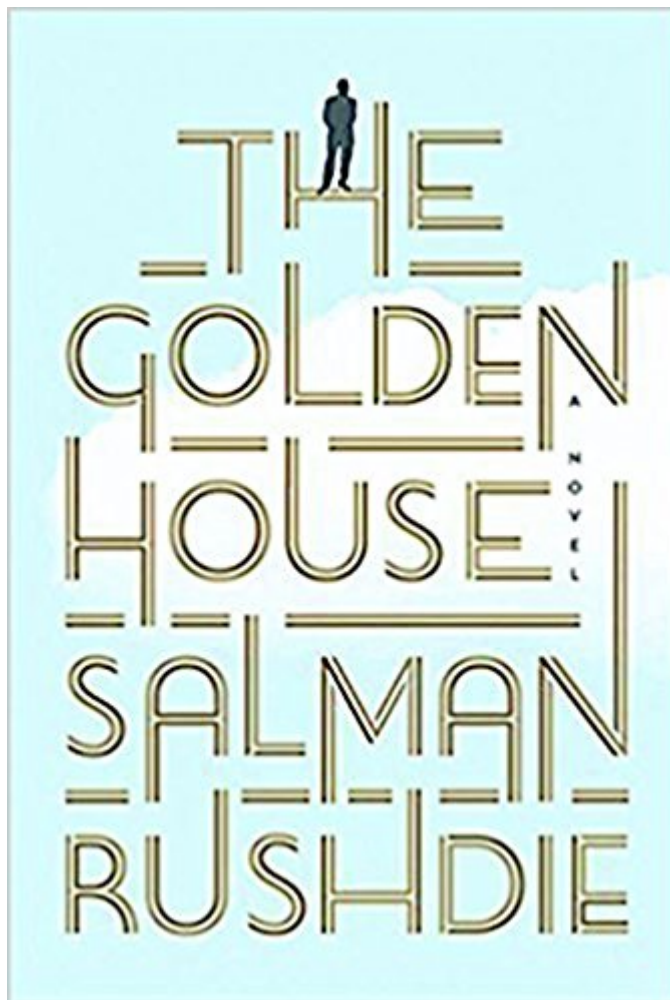


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# The Golden House: A Novel



## Synopsis

A modern American epic set against the panorama of contemporary politics and culture—a hurtling, page-turning mystery that is equal parts *The Great Gatsby* and *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. On the day of Barack Obama's inauguration, an enigmatic billionaire from foreign shores takes up residence in the architectural jewel of the Golden House, a cloistered community in New York's Greenwich Village. The neighborhood is a bubble within a bubble, and the residents are immediately intrigued by the eccentric newcomer and his family. Along with his improbable name, untraceable accent, and unmistakable whiff of danger, Nero Golden has brought along his three adult sons: agoraphobic, alcoholic Petya, a brilliant recluse with a tortured mind; Apu, the flamboyant artist, sexually and spiritually omnivorous, famous on twenty blocks; and D, at twenty-two the baby of the family, harboring an explosive secret even from himself. There is no mother, no wife; at least not until Vasilisa, a sleek Russian expat, snags the septuagenarian Nero, becoming the queen to his king—a queen in want of an heir. Our guide to the Golden House world is their neighbor Renée, an ambitious young filmmaker. Researching a movie about the Golden House, he ingratiates himself into their household. Seduced by their mystique, he is inevitably implicated in their quarrels, their infidelities, and, indeed, their crimes. Meanwhile, like a bad joke, a certain comic-book villain embarks upon a crass presidential run that turns New York upside-down. Set against the strange and exuberant backdrop of current American culture and politics, *The Golden House* also marks Salman Rushdie's triumphant and exciting return to realism. The result is a modern epic of love and terrorism, loss and reinvention—a powerful, timely story told with the daring and panache that make Salman Rushdie a force of light in our dark new age. Advance praise for *The Golden House*—Ambitious and rewarding . . . a distinctively rich epic of the immigrant experience in modern America, where no amount of money or self-abnegation can truly free a family from the sins of the past. —Publishers Weekly (starred review) —A ravishingly well-told, deeply knowledgeable, magnificently insightful, and righteously outraged epic which poses timeless questions about the human condition. . . . As Rushdie's blazing tale surges toward its crescendo, life, as it always has, rises stubbornly from the ashes, as does love. —Booklist (starred review)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of September 2017: The events of *The Golden House* begin around Obama's inauguration and end in our current time--and it is a novel about our times--but it is also a story steeped in Greek tragedy and the history of cinema. Nero Golden is a wealthy immigrant with three sons who has moved from Mumbai to New York under mysterious circumstances. He takes up residence in a downtown mansion, where he acquires a beautiful Russian second wife (one could argue just as strenuously that she acquires him). Nero, his new wife, and his sons establish their respective places in New York society, and their stories are told through the eyes of Rene, an aspiring film maker who lives across the street and who becomes entangled in the rapidly unwinding drama of the Golden family. What follows is an entertaining and enlightening novel with much to say about modern America. This is a story with roots and antecedents stretching into the past, but it feels as relevant and timely as anything you'll read today. --Chris Schlupe, Book Review

• Ambitious and rewarding . . . Replete with allusions to literature, film, mythology and politics, the novel simultaneously channels the calamities of Greek drama and the information overload of the internet. The result is a distinctively rich epic of the immigrant experience in modern America, where no amount of money or self-abnegation can truly free a family from the sins of the past. • Publishers Weekly (starred review) • A ravishingly well-told, deeply knowledgeable, magnificently insightful, and righteously outraged epic which poses timeless questions about the human condition. Can a person be both good and evil? Is family destiny? Does the past always catch up to us? In a time of polarizing extremes, can we find common ground? Will despots and their supporters be forever with us? Will humankind ever learn? Can story and art enlighten us? As [Salman] Rushdie's blazing tale surges toward its crescendo, life, as it always has, rises stubbornly from the ashes, as does love. • Booklist (starred review) • Where Tom

Wolfe's Bonfire of the Vanities sent up the go-go, me-me Reagan/Bush era, Rushdie's latest novel captures the existential uncertainties of the anxious Obama years. . . . A sort of Great Gatsby for our time: everyone is implicated, no one is innocent, and no one comes out unscathed. "Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

To me, Salman Rushdie novels are kind of like opera- you don't go for the story, you go for the way the story is expressed. You either love it or you hate it. But the bones of the story just function as a container for the expression. (I hope that makes sense.) "The Golden House" is no different. The story is about an international family - father, three sons- and their move to a little cloister of houses in New York City. One of their neighbors takes it upon himself to chronicle their experience and the novel is told from his perspective. To be completely honest, the story didn't interest me at all and I wasn't that invested in the characters, but I *was* invested in the writing. I'm usually a stickler for empathetic characters and solid plot but when the writing is wonderful, it can make up the difference. To me, Rushdie is a powerful novelist, not content to stick to any sort of genre or format within his writing. Some passages contain quotations marks to indicate speech, some do not. Some events are told in screenplay format, others in long winded speeches given by the oldest brother (who is on the autism spectrum and can recite details with ease.) The novel is dense, but it all sort of flows off the page effortlessly. This isn't a book you dip in and out of, I don't think. I usually am forced to read pages of books when I get a little free time here and there. However, I had the time this past week to sit down for a couple of hours in the afternoons, and I found myself instantly drawn into the book and Rushdie's writing. I can't consider myself a Rushdie fan, simply because I don't think my reading style (grabbing pages when I can, a few minutes here, a few minutes there... sometimes not being able to read for a few days) suits his writing style, so I can't really compare how "The Golden House" compared to many of his other novels. But compared to what I've been reading the past few years, I'm pretty impressed. This is the kind of book that makes me want to change my reading habits and spend more time reading good books instead of just dipping in and out of whatever is on my bedside table whenever I have some time.

The great Salman Rushdie's latest novel, THE GOLDEN HOUSE, led me straight to Google, where I learned that one of the settings for the book is a real Manhattan location: The MacDougal-Sullivan Gardens Historic District, 22 houses located in Greenwich Village, linked by a hidden garden. (Picture the secret London garden in the movie "Notting Hill" starring Julia Roberts and Hugh Grant.) If you think this novel will be as romantic as that garden, you will be

wrong. The novel is edgy and contemporary, in the same way *The Bonfire of the Vanities* captured its time and place. In this case, the era is the Obama-presidency and the subject is the self-invented Nero Golden, a tycoon styled along the lines of Aristotle Onassis, a Russian oligarch, or a certain other president. "If you owed the bank a buck you were a deadbeat with an overdraft. If you owed a billion you were rich and the bank was working for you. It was difficult to know how wealthy Nero Golden was. His name was everywhere in those days, on everything from hot dogs to for-profit universities" Like a snake who has shed its skin, Golden's origins and that of his three sons--all of whom speak perfect Oxbridge English--have been left behind in a land far, far away. You're going to want to devour this book to learn his dark and winding backstory. Lest I spoil the story, let me say only that the book is a surprisingly easy read.

Rushdie has surely captured the zeitgeist of America in this his latest novel. Bracketed by the election of Barack Obama in 2008 and Donald Trump in 2016 it tells the story of the mysterious and fabulously wealthy Golden family. Nero Golden and his three grown sons Petya, Apu and Dionysus arrive in the exclusive area of Greenwich Village known as the 'Gardens', from an unnamed country quickly revealed as India. How Nero came by his wealth is murky to say the least. A young neighbor Rene, who is just beginning his career as a filmmaker is mesmerized by the Golden family and quickly becomes enmeshed in their family drama as he seeks to understand them. The ever erudite Rushdie improbably puts into the mouth of the young Rene a stew of historic, literary and cinematic references, as well as politics. (Trump Derangement Syndrome is on full display here). The violence of everyday life is everywhere as the novel comes to its conclusion. But in the end I remained emotionally detached from these characters a fatal flaw for me in any novel.

I've read several books by Salman Rushdie and am always struck by his beautiful writing. He is a magnificent storyteller, his prose as evocative as poetry, his language imbued with meaning, as if each character, each plot point, is both story and metaphor. Rushdie's books are not beach reads. You can't read a page here, a page there, and hope to do it justice. But it's also writing that rewards the reader willing to devote the time and effort. *The Golden House* begins in a Greenwich Village enclave on the day the enigmatic Nero Golden moves in with his three grown sons. The narrator is a young neighbor who's fascinated by the man. The story coincides with the presidency of Barack Obama and, though it is not overtly political, the politics of family, wealth, celebrity and society saturate the tale, which is packed with observation, insight and meaning. In these days of millisecond attention spans and disposable art, Rushdie demands attention and thought -- but the

reader is rewarded richly for the effort.

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