



Prayers for the Living: A Novel

Alan Cheuse

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Prayers for the Living is a novel both grand in its vision and loving in its familiarity. Presented in a series of conversations between grandmother Minnie Bloch and her companions, Alan Cheuse, National Public Radio commentator on All Things Considered, unfolds a layered family portrait of three generations of the Bloch family, whose members are collapsing under everyday burdens and brutal betrayals. Her son Manny is a renowned, almost legendary rabbi. Respected by his congregants and surrounded by family, no one suspects that he yearns for a life of greater personal glory, but when an oracular bird delivers what Manny believes to be a message from his deceased father, he abandons his congregation in pursuit of a life in business and his entire life spirals out of control.

As Manny's fortunes rise in the corporate realm, he falls deeper into an affair with a congregant, a Holocaust survivor, his wife sinks deeper into alcoholism and depression and his daughter, traumatized by a sexual scandal at college, makes Manny the target of a plot to shatter his newly-found empire. The devoted family matriarch, Minnie, observes and recounts the tragic downfall of her family, unable to save them from themselves.

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