



The Divorce Girl (a novel of art and soul) by Caryn Mirriam Goldberg **Coming July 7, 2012**

Greetings,

When I was 14, I switched from drawing all the time to writing all the time as a way to cope with my parents' larger-than-life divorce when each of them barricaded themselves in different parts of the house. I narrated all that was happening in its vivid, violent and tender detail on paper and in my mind, telling myself I would write a novel about all this one day. Almost 40 years later, that novel is *The Divorce Girl*, a coming of age story focused on a teenage photographer who finds ways to survive and thrive through her art, an eccentric community, and her own curiosity. While my main character is smarter and taller than I was as a teen, her story mirrors my own. By starting with the frame of what I lived through, then inserting and developing all new characters, I found a way to tap into the deep resonance of growing up on ground that kept giving way.

This book is for anyone who has had to find home outside of his/her family of origin, found a way through by making art and community, or faced larger-than-life obstacles between life circumstances and heart desires. Having facilitated community writing workshops and taught for over two decades, I've witnessed thousands of stories that speak of how we've cultivated or need to cultivate greater resiliency, art and hope. This novel affirms the spirit of surviving, thriving, and making lives out of the broken pieces of our past.

I've also wandered through an overgrown labyrinth with a surprising number of ruts for years in the journey to see this book published. I'm thrilled that Ice Cube Press is bringing out *The Divorce Girl*. This small, midwestern press (recently featured in *Poets & Writers Magazine*), exemplifies the best in small presses, which are finding innovative ways to survive and grow, despite all the massive changes in the publishing world.

Thanks for helping me reach readers, and for your support of life-giving stories and presses.

Sincerely,

Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg

The Divorce Girl
A Novel of Art & Soul
by Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg

Publisher: Ice Cube Press

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The Divorce Girl: A stunning come of age story set in mid-New Jersey in the mid-70s in the middle of a mosaic of eccentric characters. Meet Deborah Shapiro, a teenage photographer whose parents' outrageous divorce lands her in the biggest flea market in the free world, a Greek diner with immigration issues, a New York City taxi company, a radical suburban synagogue, a hippie-owned boutique, and bowling alleys, beaches and bagel shops. As her home explodes apart, a first love, a series of almost-mothers, and a comical collection of mentors show Deborah how to make art out of life, and life from the wreckage of a broken home. This debut novel of Kansas Poet Laureate Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg travels through wild loss, untended grief and bad behavior with humor and imagination, illuminating how a daring heart can turn a broken girl into a woman strong enough to craft a life of art and soul.

Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg: Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg is the Poet Laureate of Kansas, and the author of 14 books, including the forthcoming *Needle in the Bone: How a Holocaust Survivor and Polish Resistance Fighter Beat the Odds and Found Each Other* (Potomac Books); *The Sky Begins At Your Feet: A Memoir on Cancer, Community & Coming Home to the Body* (Ice Cube Press); four collections of poetry; the anthologies *An Endless Skyway: Poetry from the State Poets Laureate* (co-editor, Ice Cube Press) and *Begin Again: 150 Kansas Poems* (editor, Woodley Press). Founder of Transformative Language Arts – a master's program in social and personal transformation through the written, spoken and sung word – at Goddard College where she teaches, Mirriam-Goldberg also leads writing workshops widely. With singer Kelley Hunt, she co-writes songs, offers collaborative performances, and leads writing and singing Brave Voice retreats. Her website and blog: www.CarynMirriamGoldberg.com

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Kansas Poet Laureate Debuts First Novel About Art & Soul

Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, Poet Laureate of Kansas, grew up in a family divided, cultivating hope and resiliency through her writing. Now she introduces readers to Deborah Shapiro, a New Jersey teenager, who navigates her family's dysfunction -- at times quirky, outrageous and tender -- through her art as a photographer and with the help of eccentric mentors found in all the wrong places. Mirriam-Goldberg explains, "I'm fascinated with how we survive traumatic childhoods and even adulthoods through making art and making community. This novel celebrates the family we create out of those dearest to us as well as the family of origin we can sometimes reclaim and reconnect with, even after great loss."

Writing this novel was the fulfillment of a promise Mirriam-Goldberg made to herself 40 years ago. "During my own parents' divorce, when neither would move out of the house, and later while living with my father, who suffered from Asperger's Syndrome, I became a writer because I needed words to help me make sense out of the impossible. I told myself then that I would one day write a novel about this time, paying special attention to the strange and wonderful characters who helped me through."

Mirriam-Goldberg, the author of four collections of poetry and a memoir about cancer, explains that "Writing fiction, in this case, allowed me to enter through the back door and get closer to the emotional resonance of lived experience. Adrienne Rich, a poet I love, once wrote that wreckage, dreck and waste are the materials of our lives, but so is moon rising over wreckage, dreck and waste, and all the wonder and beauty that continues. We have to look at all the materials of our lives, and my hope is for *The Divorce Girl* to shine a light on the path each of us travel toward greater clarity and vitality."

Mirriam-Goldberg is the author of 14 books, including anthologies, poetry, non-fiction and memoir. She teaches at Goddard College, and leads community writing workshops widely.

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Reviews

"A savvy and generous-hearted book, rich and gritty and wise. There have been many well-intentioned but formulaic takes on what it is to be a child of divorce, but this unique and fearless novel, beautifully written by poet Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, is fresh and unpredictable, pulsing with its young protagonist's wit, determination, and courage as she journeys through painful and frightening times, transporting herself by sheer force of will from a shattered world to a world made whole through self-determination and the saving grace of art."

~Patricia Traxler, author of *Blood* and *Forbidden Words*

"Full of great characters and charm!"

~Laura Moriarty, author of *The Center of Everything*

"When her family explodes, Deborah shuts down. Her world shrinks to what she sees through her camera's viewfinder. As she focuses on images she creates, her life emerges, filled with possibilities beyond bruises, beyond self-destruction. Art creates for her a life she could not imagine in any other way. *The Divorce Girl* is a visionary novel, a powerful story of pain and healing."

~Peggy Shumaker, Alaska State Writer Laureate, and author of *Just Breathe Normally*

"*The Divorce Girl* is as smart and funny as its teenage protagonist, whose struggles to make sense of the chaos into which her family descends will keep you riveted. Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg delivers a story that is poignant yet sharp, timeless yet fresh. Her characters come alive on the page, real as our own parents and siblings and assortment of other zany relatives. This is a book that will make you care about them all."

~Katherine Towler, author of the *Snow Island* Trilogy

"At the beginning of *The Divorce Girl*, 15-year-old Deborah confidently asserts, "I knew all about divorce." Beset by challenges, adventures, and difficulties, but always finding transcendence, Mirriam-Goldberg's pitch-perfect narrator grows on the reader while she grows toward the light of her womanhood and her art. Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, long a celebrated Kansas poet and nonfiction writer, gives us a winning fictional debut."

~Thomas Fox Averill, Writer-in-residence, Washburn University, is the author of *rode*, awarded Outstanding Western Novel of 2011.

"Written in first person, the reader may feel as if he or she has stumbled onto Deborah's diary or journal. The narrator's voice is authentic and revealing. Mirriam-Goldberg tells the story well. With the language of a poet and the acumen of one who understands family dysfunction from the inside out, the author delivers a fascinating story of loss and grief, of endurance and healing."

~Cheryl Unruh, author of *Flyover People*