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The Lost Women of Azalea Court

A NOVEL BY
Ellen Meeropol

When an elderly woman goes missing, the women of her neighborhood dig into the secrets and lies of her husband's past to save her.

On a chilly November morning, eighty-eight-year-old Iris Blum goes missing from Azalea Court, a six-bungalow development on the grounds of a long-closed state mental hospital. Her husband, Asher Blum, was the last head psychiatrist at the hospital and is writing a book about the treatment of mental illness. Their daughter Lexi, the neighbors, and police detective McPhee suspect Dr. Blum of being involved in Iris's disappearance. When the searches and interviews come up empty, the neighbors dig into the past—Asher's childhood experiences with anti-Nazi partisans in the forests of Poland, unethical practices at the mental hospital, and Iris's mysterious best friend, Harriet. The neighbors of Azalea Court, Lexi, Harriet, and Detective McPhee narrate this story together, uncovering ghosts, secrets, and lies.

ADVANCE PRAISE

"In *The Lost Women of Azalea Court*, hidden histories haunt both the landscape and the characters. I cherished the page-turning qualities of this well-crafted, fast-paced story."

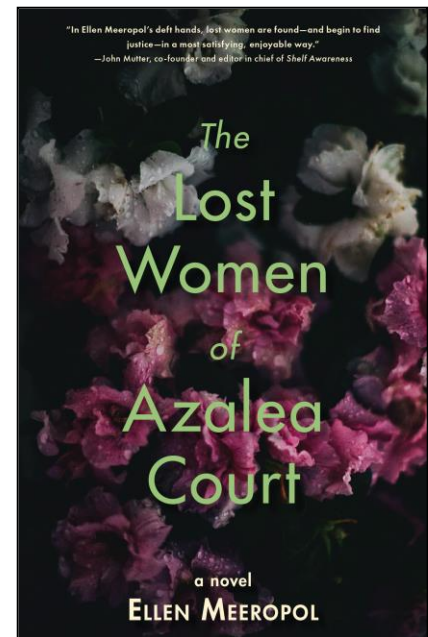
—**Lisa Downing**, Director, *Forbes Library*

"A richly-told story of a marriage—and a community—unraveled by secrets, knit back by love. *The Lost Women of Azalea Court* is a beautiful, wise, and big-hearted novel."

—**Jennifer Rosner**, author of *The Yellow Bird Sings*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ellen Meeropol is the author of the novels *Her Sister's Tattoo*, *Kinship of Clover*, *On Hurricane Island*, and *House Arrest*, and the play *Gridlock*. Essay and short story publications include *Ms. Magazine*, *The Writer's Chronicle*, *Guernica*, and *The Boston Globe*. Her work has been honored by the Sarton Prize, the Women's National Book Association, the Massachusetts Center for the Book, and PBS NewsHour. A founding member of Straw Dog Writers' Guild, Ellen coordinates their Social Justice Writing project and lives in Northampton, MA.



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MORE PRAISE FOR *THE LOST WOMEN OF AZALEA COURT*

“A compelling tale of family secrets, friendship, and private traumas set on the grounds of a long-closed state asylum. The investigation into a missing woman unearths the hospital’s darkest history. Fantastic setting and taut pacing.”

—**Kathy Crowley**, co-owner, Belmont Books

“The *Lost Women of Azalea Court* begins with a seemingly simple, explainable mystery: an eighty-eight-year-old woman disappears from the house she shares with her husband, a psychiatrist, and the former head of the now-closed state mental hospital for which Azalea Court served as staff housing. But that mystery is just one of many related, slowly unveiled mysteries and secrets, some of which go back to the Holocaust and the Red Scare after World War II. In the search for the missing woman, the women of Azalea Court, a delightful mix of characters, unexpectedly band together. In Ellen Meeropol’s deft hands, lost women are found—and begin to find justice—in a most satisfying, enjoyable way.”

—**John Mutter**, co-founder and editor in chief of *Shelf Awareness*

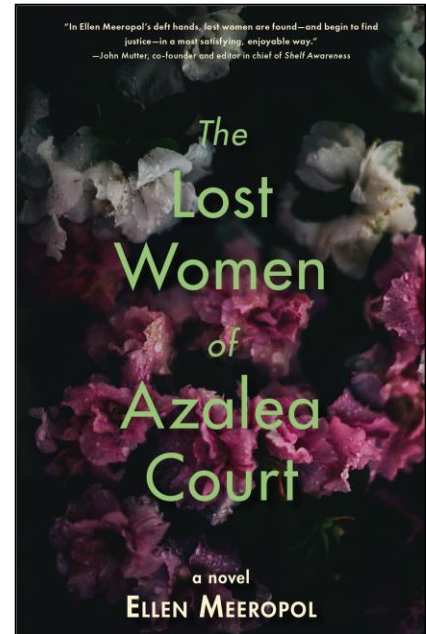
FROM *THE LOST WOMEN OF AZALEA COURT*

Everything changed when Iris went missing.

Before that morning, if you had asked anyone living in the six bungalows on Azalea Court if we were close, we would have rolled our eyes. We’re not one of those neighborhoods that celebrate holidays with grab bag gift exchanges or host cheerful red, white, and blue progressive dinners where you have appetizers at one house and off to another for the next course. We mostly respect each other’s privacy and stay in our own homes and yards.

People often ask us if Azalea Court is cursed. “How could it not be?” they insist. It’s a balloon-on-a-string shaped road, though that description implies celebration and fun and that’s not really us. Our small homes sit on the grounds of the former state mental hospital, where thousands of lost souls were incarcerated over the course of a century and a half.

If you could see directly into our hearts and read our secrets, you’d know that in addition to the ugly ancient secrets of the hospital, our little street is home to people who have survived all sorts of trauma, from genocide to rape to kidnapping to torture. But on that Friday morning in November 2019 when Iris went missing, Azalea Court was quietly sliding out of autumn and anticipating winter. It was the last place any of us expected to see police cars and search teams.



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