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Pears on a Willow Tree

By Leslie Pietrzyk



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Pears on a Willow Tree By Leslie Pietrzyk

Pears on a Willow Tree is a multigenerational roadmap of love and hate, distance and closeness, and the lure of roots that both bind and sustain us all.

The Marchewka women are inseparable. They relish the joys of family gatherings; from preparing traditional holiday meals to organizing a wedding in which each of them is given a specific task -- whether it's sewing the bridal gown or preserving pickles as a gift to the newlyweds. Bound together by recipes, reminiscences and tangled relationships, these women are the foundation of a dignified, compassionate family--one that has learned to survive the hardships of emigration and assimilation in twentieth-century America.

But as the century evolves, so does each succeeding generation. As the older women keep a tight hold on the family traditions passed from mother to daughter, the younger women are dealing with more modern problems, wounds not easily healed by the advice of a local priest or a kind word from mother.

Amy is separated by four generations from her great-grandmother Rose, who emigrated from Poland. Rose's daughter Helen adjusted to the family's new home in a way her mother never could, while at the same time accepting the importance of Old Country ways. But Helen's daughter Ginger finds herself suffocating within the close-knit family, the first Marchewka woman to leave Detroit for the adventure of life beyond the reach of her mother and grandmother.

It's in the American West that Giner raises her daughter Amy, uprooted from the safety of kitchens perfumed by the aroma of freshly baked poppy seed cake and pierogi made by hand by generations of women. But Amy is about to realize that there may be room in her heart for both the Old World and the New.



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Leslie Pietrzyk's *Pears on a Willow Tree* starts with a recipe for *pierogi* and ends with one for poppy-seed cake. In between, four generations of Polish-American women talk, cook, argue, sew each other's wedding dresses, tell stories, and understand and misunderstand each other in the way that only mothers and daughters can. Starting with iron-willed Rose, who emigrates from Poland, and ending with Amy, who flees the role of her alcoholic mother's keeper, the Marchewka women enact an ancient dance of embracing and rejecting the tradition they come from. "It is the girls who keep the family alive," Rose writes to her Polish mother; but it is also true that, as she later tells her great-granddaughter, "It's impossible for a good daughter to leave; it's impossible for a good daughter to stay." Many of the chapters in *Pears on a Willow Tree* were first published as stories, and they sometimes hang together a trifle too neatly, with none of a novel's usual depth or range. But Pietrzyk has a nifty, uncluttered prose style and above all a keen ear for the way women really do talk. *Pears on a Willow Tree* is a promising debut from a writer with a gift for the enduring art of domestic portraiture.

From Publishers Weekly

A family saga comprising 16 self-contained chapters, each a monologue (or dialogue) featuring one of four women in a prolific Polish-American clan, this compelling debut is an example of the novel-in-stories at its best. In prose as plain and four-square as her protagonists, Pietrzyk traces the family's evolution from 1919 through the late 1980s, from its transplantation to the U.S.—specifically, Detroit—through three generations, showing how the older women (who privately refer to themselves as Marchewskas, after matriarch Rose's maiden name) preserve ethnic traditions and family customs and why their daughters shake them off. Of the 10 women of the Marchewska family, the book focuses upon Rose, her daughter Helen, granddaughter Ginger (the rebel who abandons Detroit and settles in Phoenix) and great-granddaughter Amy. The voices of these four women are quite different—Rose's primal and earthy; Helen's pathetic; Ginger's cool, irreverent, iconoclastic and questioning; Amy's tempered and mature beyond her years. Reading this novel is like leafing through a family photo album (one of Pietrzyk's favored motifs) except that, once you pick up this book, it's hard to put it down.

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From [Booklist](#)

"If we know we can't have the thing we want most, why does our desire for it never lessen?" asks Amy, the fourth generation of Polish women in this memorable first novel. Although there are snatches of Polish lore and cuisine, this taut story is really about mothers and daughters. From Rose, who in 1919 writes to her mother in Poland that she has a new, American name, to Helen, who made her peace with old ways and new in Detroit, to Ginger, who left the family she found suffocating only to find another kind of slow asphyxiation in alcohol, to her daughter Amy, who taught English in Thailand but holds the ties of memory her mother tried so hard to cut, the tale dips and weaves like the ebb and flow of voices overheard from the kitchen. Pietrzyk is neither sentimental nor detached; instead, her women, tied by blood, sound like relatives we recognize. Similar in its grace and theme to Anna Monardo's lovely *Courtyard of Dreams* (1993).

GraceAnne A. DeCandido

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Bingham:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children right up until adult are different content. As it is known to us that book is very important for all of us. The book Pears on a Willow Tree ended up being making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It doesn't matter what advantages for you. The e-book Pears on a Willow Tree is not only giving you much more new information but also being your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your own personal spend time to read your reserve. Try to make relationship with the book Pears on a Willow Tree. You never feel lose out for everything when you read some books.

Silvia Washington:

Hey guys, do you wishes to finds a new book to study? May be the book with the title Pears on a Willow Tree suitable to you? Typically the book was written by well known writer in this era. Typically the book untitled Pears on a Willow Tree is a single of several books that will everyone read now. That book was inspired a number of people in the world. When you read this book you will enter the new dimension that you ever know ahead of. The author explained their thought in the simple way, consequently all of people can easily to comprehend the core of this e-book. This book will give you a lots of information about this world now. So you can see the represented of the world in this book.

Brooke Gafford:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the water world or hanging out with pals is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, then why you don't try thing that really opposite from that. 1 activity that make you not sense tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition details. Even you love Pears on a Willow Tree, it is possible to enjoy both. It is good combination right, you still wish to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh come on its mind hangout people. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

Kimberly Lunceford:

Pears on a Willow Tree can be one of your starter books that are good idea. Most of us recommend that straight away because this guide has good vocabulary that could increase your knowledge in words, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to put every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing Pears on a Willow Tree but doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be one of it. This great information can certainly drawn you into fresh stage of crucial contemplating.

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