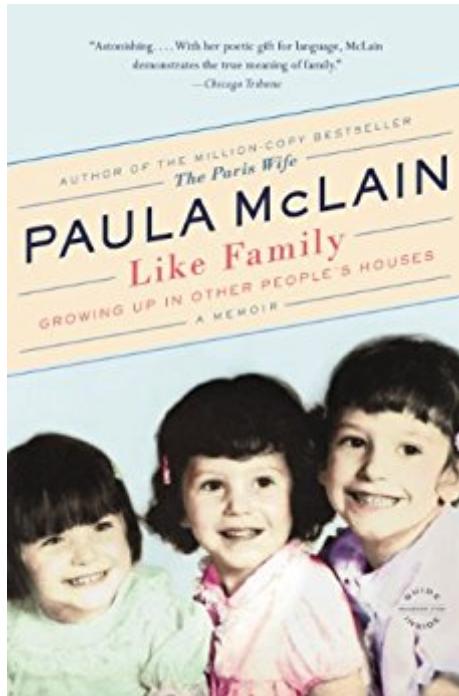


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Like Family: Growing Up In Other People's Houses, A Memoir



Synopsis

The first book by the author of the New York Times bestseller *The Paris Wife* is a powerful and haunting memoir of the years she and her two sisters spent as foster children. In the early 70s, after being abandoned by both parents, the girls were made wards of the Fresno County, California court and spent the next 14 years-in a series of adoptive homes. The dislocations, confusions, and odd pleasures of an unrooted life form the basis of one of the most compelling memoirs in recent years--a book the tradition of Jo Ann Beard's *Boys of My Youth* and Mary Karr's *The Liar's Club*. McLain's beautiful writing and limber voice capture the intense loneliness, sadness, and determination of a young girl both on her own and responsible, with her siblings, for staying together as a family.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A couple of months after their feckless, volatile father lands in jail, Mom drops the three girls off at Granny's one evening and doesn't come back for 16 years. Paula, age 4, and her sisters, Teresa, 6, and Penny, 3, prove too much for the old lady and enter into a long and rocky relationship with the Fresno, CA, foster care system. Paula McLain's harrowing memoir of growing up among strangers

who may or may not become family teems with complex, shifting emotions. Chief among them, especially in the early years, is fear, and the yearning to belong to a family, any family. But that was not to be. Not quite anyway. McLain's fluid prose captures the reader with its immediacy; its sense of urgency and its intimacy. This is a page-turner with real orphan children to root for. It never seems to occur to the girls, as it does to the reader, that they could be separated. But they never are, which is the saving grace of stability that runs through their Dickensian childhood. Their first brief placement ends with a charge of thievery, but their second is a mystery. The Clapps are wealthy and their children are grown. Mrs. Clapp has no humor and no affection. Her rules and routines are rigid and she is fanatically house proud. One rainy day after school, the girls slosh through puddles to the car. "Just as we got to the Cadillac, the sky started to drop hail like frozen BBs. Mrs. Clapp sat behind the wheel in her lavender rabbit-fur coat, her dry fingers toying with the door lock as though it were a chess piece, deciding whether she would let us into the car. We'd ruin it, we would." So what does she want with three little girls? This is not McLain's question; it's the reader's, and McLain never comes out with the horrifying answer, either.

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