

★ **After Anatevka: A Novel Inspired by "Fiddler on the Roof"****Alexandra Silber**

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Hodel persists with grace in this continuing story of Tevye's second daughter.

Alexandra Silber's acting credits include rounds on Broadway and in the West End as two of Tevye's daughters in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Hodel, the second-oldest daughter, made an impression on her, and this passionate novel—centered on the “after” of Hodel's trek into Siberia to join her love, Perchik, in a work camp—is the blessed result.

Hodel has no idea what to expect when she leaves the safety of Anatevka for the desolate north. What she finds is a compassionless place where love is viewed as a tool for manipulating those who are chained, and where faith is not often rewarded. But Hodel is indomitable. Through unspeakable violence and abuse, she carves a life out for herself and Perchik, right at the edges of the salt mine that threatens to claim his bodily well-being.

This afterstory does not come at the expense of backstory; Hodel's time with her family weaves in to the narrative as well, including her slightly antagonistic, but always loving, relationship with her older sister, Tzeitel. The admiration she expresses when Tzeitel marries for love—near unheard of in hard shtetl life—makes for moving passages, and the longing that she feels for those left behind is a poignant touch.

Silber's characters sing, and scenes here have a nostalgic, vital air that will speak to *Fiddler* devotees. Perchik's difficult, loveless youth is explored, and does much to fill in the missing pieces of the itinerant's story. The reason with which he fights his way through the gulag's challenges is inspiring.

“There was a limit,” Hodel reflects in the midst of their challenges, “a moment when knowledge, falling drop by painful drop, caused the spongelike heart to overflow. A moment it could hold no more.” The grace with which Hodel persists through this emotionally challenging story stands to make an impression. A shocking ending will undoubtedly leave readers wanting even more of Hodel's tale; on the other hand, isn't it longing that makes a story great?

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (July/August 2017)

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