



Fishwives

Sally Bellerose

Bywater Books (Feb 9, 2021)

Softcover \$17.95 (350pp)

978-1-61294-189-9

In Sally Bellerose's novel *Fishwives*, an elderly lesbian couple looks back on their lives together.

Regina and Jackie have been together for sixty years. They are in mediocre health, can't afford groceries without coupons, and are still very much in love. On a cold February day, they reminisce about how they have weathered addiction, infidelity, and poverty to achieve their own version of a successful marriage.

Told mostly through flashbacks, Regina and Jackie's story begins in New York in 1955. Their first meeting ends in a bar raid—a clear indication that things will never be simple for them. Their stubbornness, combined with the world's intolerance, results in obstacle after obstacle for them. Still, they build a family together, only to lose it and have to build it up again. Limited career opportunities leave them cutting coupons and counting pennies well into their eighties. Arguments are a fact of life, as Regina's romantic ideals and Jackie's need for independence clash across the decades.

Though Regina and Jackie know their own history well, they still take pleasure in rehashing their romance and examining all of the details that make up a life: the endless chores that need doing, the physical and emotional pain of aging, the friends and family who helped them through dark times. It is not the stories themselves that matter, so much as the sound of a beloved voice and the presence of a familiar body. And, if they are not quite able to pack away their regrets, each woman at least has the other to put things in perspective. There is no happy-ever-after here, not in the traditional sense. There is only painful, imperfect, wonderful love.

In the reflective novel *Fishwives*, two willful women defy the odds to make a life together.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (January / February 2021)

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