FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

The Reluctant Daughter
Leslea Newman
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The Reluctant Daughter opens as a bittersweet modern comedy of manners about generational conflict. There's an unemotional, chain-smoking mother, a father who keeps trying to keep order, and a lesbian daughter. But this daughter isn't a teenager. At age forty-nine, Professor Lydia Pinkowitz teaches women's studies and lives happily with her partner, Allie, and their calico cat, Mishmosh. Allie is forever writing notes to Lydia: "Call your mother." This is because Allie's mother is dead and the only family Allie has is Lydia. The only family Lydia wants is Allie.

An early scene in the book, described in hilarious detail by Lesléa Newman, the author of more than fifty books and the winner of numerous literary awards, is the Dinner From Hell in New York City with the Family From Hell, during which Doris, Lydia's mother, tries to intimidate the waiter. Also present are Jack and Crystal. Jack, who works in some unspecified aspect of show business, is Lydia's cousin. He came to live with her family and was spoiled by her parents when his mother died and his father ran off with another woman. Crystal drinks. Lydia and Jack hate each other.

But the book takes an unexpected turn. Lydia and Allie are making love when the phone rings. "'Lydia, it's uh…it's Dad.' My father's voice sounds tired as he falters. 'I'm call-ing to tell you that your mother is fine.'" This throws Lydia into a panic. What happened?

Doris is in Intensive Care in a hospital in Los Angeles. Lydia flies to her side, and thanks to ongoing informal therapy from friend Vera, mother and daughter at last recognize each other's love.

This book is beautifully written and addresses issues that many women face. Lydia's epiphany is at least partly a confrontation with her own illusions. Perhaps she is too reluctant a daughter. When she spends time in her mother's hospital room, she is suddenly and for the first time able to connect and communicate with her mother (who regains consciousness just for her) at the level of the heart. Lydia remembers a childhood memory of coming upon her mother sitting in a dark kitchen at two in the morning, smoking cigarette after cigarette. But they never

talked about it. The various distances created by sexuality, generation, family, and gender roles are addressed; the eventual psychic and emotional connection between mother and daughter are beautifully evoked in this instructional and enjoyable read.