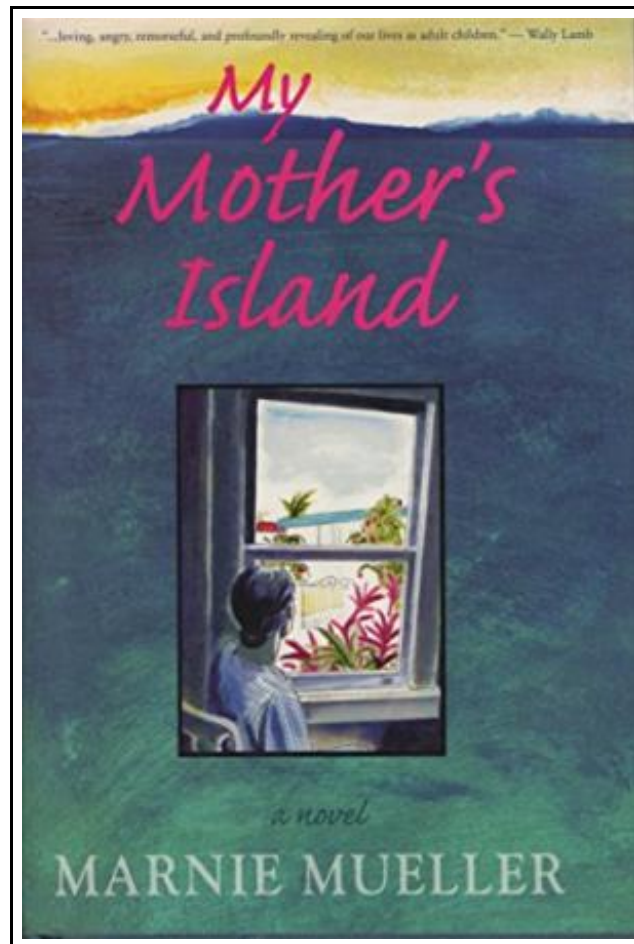


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Curbstone Press, 2002. Hardcover. Book Condition: New. Dust Jacket Condition: Fine DJ. First Edition Stated. Curbstone Press 2002 First Edition Stated New/Fine DJ In Plastic. From A woman returns to Puerto Rico to help her terminally ill mother through her final days in Mueller's third novel, a gritty yet graceful that unflinchingly looks at the reality of losing a parent. The story opens with Sarah Ellis leaving her job and husband in New York to join her mother, Reba, as abdominal cancer begins its final march through Reba's battered body. But Sarah is hardly an angel of mercy in a series of flashbacks, Mueller reveals both Reba's deep-seated cruelty toward her daughter and Sarah's hatred for her mother, a revulsion offset to some extent by Sarah's respect for the devotion to social activism that Reba shared with her late husband, Scott. Some of the passages describing the family history are a bit mawkish and pedestrian, but the second half of this turns absolutely riveting as Mueller delves into Sarah's fear, love and loathing while Reba stubbornly tries to hang onto her dignity as she awaits a final visit from her son-in-law, Roberto, a psychologist who is all too aware of the manipulation dominating the mother-daughter relation. The account of the final days is especially gut-wrenching, as Sarah is finally forced to call in a nurse and a family friend to help her through her mother's brutal last hours. As a novel, this is a lovely but painful account of a difficult journey two women must take together to bring their problematic relation to a close. On a deeper level, Mueller has crafted an exceptional about the spirituality of death and dying that gets inside the reality of losing a parent with an intimacy and depth that no self-help treatise can...

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