



Don't Make a Scene: A Novel

Valerie Block

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As Diane Kurasik nears the rapids of her fortieth birthday, it seems her world is taking on the bittersweet tones of a life-change comedy from the 1970s, something starring Glenda Jackson or Jill Clayburgh. The director of a Greenwich Village revival house cinema and a single woman who has watched everyone else move on, Diane is reminded daily of her status and her limitations. Clearly there is some lesson she was supposed to have learned by now, but what it is continues to elude her.

Vladimir Hurtado Padrón has troubles of his own. Although he fled Cuba a decade earlier, he still can't convince his estranged wife in Havana to grant him a divorce. When Diane meets and falls for Vladimir, he is up front about the stalemate in his personal life, letting her make her own decisions. Diane considers the minor role he has to offer and wonders: Would Ingrid Bergman put up with this?

An eviction notice jolts Diane out of her home and her routine—aren't all New York stories ultimately about real estate? Diane shuttles between the couches of friends and family, dodging advice and criticism in equal measure and touring countless fatally flawed Manhattan apartments.

Meanwhile, Vladimir refuses to succumb to nostalgia as he deals with the exile's dilemma: What happens when you can't go home? Then an unexpected visitor from Vladimir's past arrives on the scene and becomes captivated by Diane just as her ardor for Vladimir is cooling. Diane considers returning his affections, and wonders if she's lost her mind.

An unabashed valentine to cinema, Don't Make a Scene is a sparkling, witty novel that asks, Do movies satisfy the yearning, or merely fan the flames? Valerie Block uses tart humor and a deceptively light touch in this fiercely intelligent look at how the movies shape and haunt us, and what happens when the eternal allure of classic movies collides with the daily indignities of contemporary life. Don't Make a Scene is a refreshing comedy about finding fascination, irritation, and joy in unexpected places.

From the Hardcover edition.



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