



## All That Rises

**Alma García**

University of Arizona Press (Oct 17, 2023)

Softcover \$19.95 (456pp)

978-0-8165-4915-3

In Alma García's novel *All That Rises*, two families living on the borderland between the US and Mexico share a tangled history.

Rose Marie leaves her husband and three children without explanation. On the same day but a few houses away, Inez knocks on her younger brother Jerry's door after a fifteen-year absence. The events set off a chain of revelations. Both families adapt, implode, and transform.

Rose Marie's husband tries to force his children into convenient silence and almost drowns at an amusement park. Jerry relives his childhood in the shadow of his older sister while his wife, Chavela, throws Inez an alcohol-free welcome home party. Caught in their own worlds, each person papers over old wounds, protects secrets, and longs for answers to questions they won't ask. As Jerry, a history professor and an ex-border patrol agent, says: "the trouble with history...is that by the time you notice it repeating, it's already happened."

The characterizations are virtuosic in their display of psychological insight—just as at home in the minds of border agents, maids, and housewives. Tracing the fault lines that divide families and neighborhoods, the book sheds light on the way secrecy is passed down through generations.

The prose is confident, filled with evocative images and poetic parallels: "A handprint smears the window facing Mexico" in the room where Rose Marie's children play video games and ignore their father; Jerry's son Marcus finds all of his father's siblings confessing to being the black sheep of the family. And the often heady story assumes a fierce pace, resulting in an intricate, organic, and moving book.

A serious novel, *All That Rises* eclipses social and political ideologies and examines how the contradictions of America's southern border take root in its families.

WILLEM MARX (September / October 2023)

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