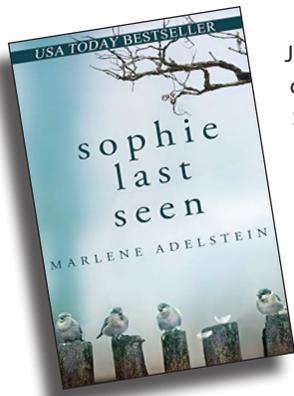


Sophie Last Seen, a USA Today Best-Seller

When Marlene Adelstein ventured from her Beachwood home to attend NYU film school and build a career as a film development executive for top Hollywood producers, she didn't know that her path would lead to the Hudson Valley, a peaceful haven for artists and writers, to earn her living as a freelance editor of novels and memoirs. This location also provided inspiration for her to write her debut novel, *Sophie Last Seen*, a USA Today best-seller.



The story is about Jesse, whose 10-year-old daughter, Sophie, had disappeared from a shopping mall six years earlier, never to be found. Jesse works at a bookstore and lives in a state of self-destructive limbo as she

navigates through life. When Star, Sophie's best friend, begins working there (it's her dad's store), an uncomfortable alliance begins. Star carries her own secrets about the day, tension builds, and these two wounded souls come together to discover the truth.

Marlene chose this topic because she was inspired by the real-life case of Etan Patz, a young boy from Soho who disappeared in 1979 and was never found. Marlene had seen flyers posted of this little boy and often thought about how his poor mother could move forward. A vivid dream also led Marlene down the path of this storyline, one that included her own missing child (fictitious), her inner child, and the news story about Etan.

"This is an inspiring tale of one woman's journey in search of the truth about her missing daughter," Marlene said. "It weaves together themes of forgiveness, romance, and acceptance."

Marlene explained that Jesse, a lapsed artist who is now divorced from Sophie's dad, lives a fairly secluded life and is stuck, grasping for clues to her daughter's whereabouts. Sophie is a very special child: bright, creative and moody, who

often had tantrums when things weren't just so. She also had an obsession with birds. When Jesse and Star reunite, they decipher a message from Sophie's birding journal that points to an entirely new explanation for her disappearance, and they set off together on a road trip in hopes of discovering some kind of resolution.

"Sophie's character was developed as a spirited child because photos of missing children are often portrayed with smiles, as though they're the happiest kids on the block," Marlene said. "I wondered, what if this child wasn't so perfect? What if she wasn't at all like her smiling photo? I created her character to include special gifts and to further layer the story."

Marlene created a bird theme because when she was on the Vineyard at her family cottage, she repeatedly saw a homeless man who was sleeping on the beach. As she watched him every morning, she became obsessed. "He had an elaborate routine and it occurred to me that I was watching him as though he were a bird, and I transferred my actions to Sophie's character, developing birds as her passion."

The story reveals how Jesse learns to deal with grief, move on with her life, and accept her daughter for who she was. It unfolds like a movie, scene by scene, thanks to Marlene's professional background.

"Parenting, divorce, spirited children, hoarding, and social acceptance are other themes that run through the story," Marlene said. "I want readers to understand that there is no time limit on grief, neither is there a right or wrong way to grieve. I also want them to know that art can be therapeutic and healing. In the end, I hope *Sophie Last Seen* is uplifting and inspiring. It is both a tale of heartbreak and eternal hope."

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Next up for Marlene is a comic novel about a struggling novelist who, after a recent breakup, takes in an elderly tenant, an overlooked painter with secrets, and how these women help each other overcome their personal obstacles. She's also working on a memoir in essays that deals with a time in her life when everything was falling apart – converging in a crazy vortex of loss and grief – and how sometimes you just have to learn to let go of all you can't control.

Marlene truly follows her passion. "I've been writing quietly for many years. Part of me wishes I had started earlier. I'm a slow writer, but that's ok, I get the job done."

Her advice to wannabe authors? "Write, stick with it, and don't be afraid. Editing makes your story come alive and persistence is key."

When Marlene is not reading other people's manuscripts or writing her own, she may be found walking in nature, and listening to the songs of the birds.

Sophie Last Seen may be purchased on Amazon. For more information, visit www.marleneadelstein.com.

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