



# Disobedience: A Novel

*Jane Hamilton*

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## **Disobedience: A Novel** Jane Hamilton

From Jane Hamilton, author of the beloved *New York Times* bestsellers **A Map of the World** and **The Book of Ruth**, comes a warmly humorous, poignant novel about a young man, his mother's e-mail, and the often surprising path of infidelity.

Henry Shaw, a high school senior, is about as comfortable with his family as any seventeen-year-old can be. His father, Kevin, teaches history with a decidedly socialist tinge at the Chicago private school Henry and his sister attend. His mother, Beth, who plays the piano in a group specializing in antique music, is a loving, attentive wife and parent. Henry even accepts the offbeat behavior of his thirteen-year-old sister, Elvira, who is obsessed with Civil War reenactments and insists on dressing in handmade Union uniforms at inopportune times.

When he stumbles on his mother's e-mail account, however, Henry realizes that all is not as it seems. There, under the name Liza38, a name that Henry innocently established for her, is undeniable evidence that his mother is having an affair with one Richard Polloco, a violin maker and unlikely paramour who nonetheless has a very appealing way with words and a romantic spirit that, in Henry's estimation, his own father woefully lacks.

Against his better judgment, Henry charts the progress of his mother's infatuation, her feelings of euphoria, of guilt, and of profound, touching confusion. His knowledge of Beth's secret life colors his own tentative explorations of love and sex with the ephemeral Lily, and casts a new light on the arguments-usually focused on Elvira-in which his parents regularly indulge. Over the course of his final year of high school, Henry observes each member of the family, trying to anticipate when they will find out about the infidelity and what the knowledge will mean to each of them.

Henry's observations, set down ten years after that fateful year, are much more than the "old story" of adultery his mother deemed her affair to be. With her inimitable grace and compassion, Jane Hamilton has created a novel full of gentle humor and rich insights into the nature of love and the deep, mysterious bonds that hold families together.

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