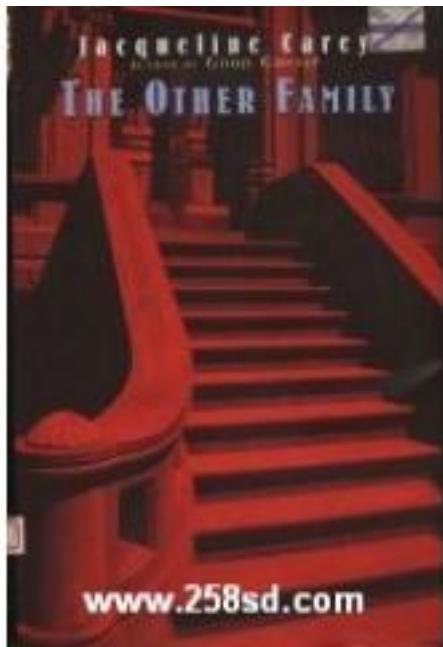


Other Family, The



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Amazon.com It's 1968 and 14-year-old Joan is trying to figure out what to do with her life while struggling against the mistakes and irresponsible behavior of her parents. Though she and her brother Hugh live in western Massachusetts with their eccentric father, every July 4 they visit their mother, who has run away to be a hippie in New York. Although Joan's mother has the clothes, the talk, and the hippie attitude down pat, her life revolves around the family of her older sister, Iris, who seem to be modern-day versions of Edith Wharton's New Yorkers. Joan becomes fascinated by the wealth and the happiness of this "other family" in comparison to her own, but soon learns that appearances aren't always what they seem. From Publishers Weekly In this smartly told, funny and deeply poignant first novel, the author of the praised short story collection Good Gossip offers both a fractured but

believable coming-of-age tale of a young narrator, Joan, and a perspicacious exploration of divorce circa the late 1960s. As the novel opens, 14-year-old Joan and her younger brother, Hugh, are reunited in Manhattan with their mother after a two-year hiatus, during which she abandoned them and divorced their nutty, dope-smoking musician father. The siblings learn that they will be spending their summer vacation with their mother's sister Iris's family, the Eberlanders, which includes husband Charles, an overbearing psychiatrist, and two seemingly perfect teenaged daughters, Polly and Budge. During the course of their annual summer visits, Joan and Hugh are introduced to the magnetic Eberlanders's posh life in Brooklyn Heights. Joan develops a crush on her aunt Iris, who is beautiful, accident-prone and running for local political office; dislikes Uncle Charles, whom she suspects of having an affair with Iris's best friend, perky Vi; is disgusted with the "new version" of her well meaning but oblivious mother, a nascent hippie involved with a slimy dud of a boyfriend; and discovers that Polly and Budge are as rebellious as she is. When the Eberlanders' marriage dissolves and Charles and Vi marry, Iris at first seems to handle it with grace. But when she later suffers a mental breakdown, Joan understands the reasons?Iris's fear that she is no longer "the heroine of her own life, " but merely someone "who got to talk to the main characters sometimes"?and that this epiphany applies equally to herself. Carey's wry, taut prose is seamless, her characterization is empathetic and sharp, and her evocation of the new personal freedoms wrought by the '60s?and their resulting broken bonds?is subtle and memorable. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. See all Editorial Reviews

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