

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Jessica Strawser is the editor-at-large at *Writer's Digest*, where she served as editorial director for nearly a decade and became known for her in-depth cover interviews with such luminaries as David Sedaris and Alice Walker. She's the author of the book club favorites *Almost Missed You*, a Barnes & Noble Best New Fiction pick; *Not That I Could Tell*, a Book of the Month bestseller; and her latest, *Forget You Know Me*, now new in paperback. Her fourth novel, *A Million Reasons Why*, was named to Most Anticipated lists from Goodreads, SheReads, Frolic, E! News & others ahead of its March 2021 release (all from St. Martin's Press).

Honored as the 2019 Writer-in-Residence at the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Strawser has written for *The New York Times Modern Love*, *Publishers Weekly* and other fine venues, and lives in Cincinnati with her husband and two children. A contributing editor for *Career Authors* and an active Tall Poppy Writer, she keynotes frequently for book clubs, libraries, writing conferences, and

other events that are kind enough to invite her. - Author's website

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We seem to put a lot of emphasis on the stories of how couples meet—husbands and wives find themselves fielding this question even after they've been together for most of their lives. Why do you think that is?
2. At pivotal moments, Violet and Finn think similar thoughts, but in different contexts. In Chapters 1 and 13, they separately reflect on their odds of getting together, and express that they can't believe their luck. In Chapters 17 and 18, both feel that they have "never been so sure"—and "never been so wrong." How do these echoes serve to highlight how well matched and/ or mismatched they are?
3. Caitlin and Finn have, by most accounts, a platonic friendship—something many people consider rare or even impossible. In what ways is their relationship meaningful? In what ways is it unhealthy? Do you think there may have been more to it than was ever revealed on the page?
4. Do you sympathize with Caitlin's position, as the story unfolds, or do you find her behavior inexcusable under any circumstances?

5. In what ways is Violet complacent in the events leading up to Finn’s ultimate disappearance with Bear? Do you feel she isn’t complacent at all?
6. Violet and Finn are both orphans by the time they meet. How does that affect their emotional attachments, separately and together?
7. Gram is the only one remaining at Violet’s side as certain hard truths come to light, and she serves as both a sounding board and a mirror. Do you find her assessments of Violet accurate? How is Gram right about her, and how might she be wrong?
8. Finn cannot accept the forgiveness of Maribel’s family because he cannot forgive himself. Can you relate to this point of view? Do you think he ultimately would have been any better off if he’d kept in contact with the Bransons?
9. Do you imagine that if Finn had never met Maribel, he and Violet would have had a happily-ever-after relationship?
10. Caitlin seems sure that Maribel was not “the one” for Finn, but one of multiple suitable matches. Violet seemed equally sure that Finn *was* “the one” for her— until she wasn’t. Do you think the concept of “the one” is hopeful, or damaging? Do you believe in an “only and forever” kind of love?
11. Did George ultimately surprise you, or were his reactions in some ways inevitable?
12. Do you think Caitlin and George get off too easily, or do you imagine they privately pay a higher price than others may be aware of?
13. What was the true role of fate in the story? Were there pivotal “almost” moments and near-misses that you didn’t fully absorb the impact of until they’d passed?
14. What do you make of the novel’s final encounter? What do you imagine the future holds for this family?
15. In our own missed connections, are we better off not knowing what might have been?

- <https://readinggroupchoices.com/books/almost-missed-you/>

BOOK REVIEWS

Publisher’s Weekly

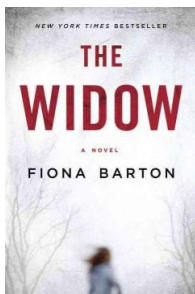
In Strawser’s nerve-wracking debut, a woman’s husband leaves with their son, shattering her life and catching others in his devastating wake. Violet and Finn Welsh and their three-year-old son, Bear, are on vacation in Florida when Violet’s world is turned upside down. Although Finn’s life before marrying Violet was marked by tragedy, Violet thought they were happy, but now all she knows is that she will do anything to get her son back. In between them is Caitlin Bryce-Daniels, Finn’s longtime best friend and

now Violet's close friend as well, whom Finn blackmails into helping him by threatening to reveal a horrible secret. The narrative, which alternates between the three, as well as past and present, is undeniably suspenseful. The conclusion is a bit neat, but Strawser's exploration of marriage, its expectations, and motherhood are spot-on, making for an absorbing read. (Mar.) --Staff (Reviewed 01/30/2017) (Publishers Weekly, vol 264, issue 05, p)

Library Journal

"All the wrong people know all the wrong secrets here" says one character in Strawser's debut, knitting parental abduction with a page-turner of devastating secrets unraveling among friends and spouses. Violet's blessed life goes haywire when husband Finn takes their toddler son, Bear, and abandons her during a beach vacation. Finn draws friend Caitlin into his breakaway from his wife by threatening to expose her marital secrets if she doesn't hide him in the family cabin in Kentucky. But to help a desperate Finn is to betray a grieving mother. Torn between obligations of motherhood and friendship, Caitlin accedes to Finn's demands while strategizing a plan to return Bear to his mother. Alternating time lines and narrators first raise—and then answer— questions in a story than has more twists and turns than the roads in the Blue Ridge Mountains. VERDICT Fans of smart women's fiction mixed with a fast-paced plot should not miss this startling first novel from the editorial director of *Writer's Digest Magazine*. [See Prepub Alert, 10/3/16.] --Wendy W. Paige (Reviewed 01/01/2017) (Library Journal, vol 142, issue 01, p92)

READALIKES



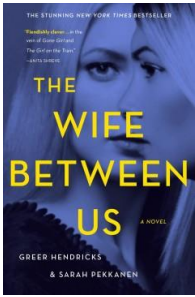
***The Widow* by Fiona Barton**

Following the twists and turns of an unimaginable crime, *The Widow* is an electrifying debut thriller that will take you into the dark spaces that exist between a husband and a wife. When the police started asking questions, Jean Taylor turned into a different woman. One who enabled her and her husband to carry on when more bad things began to happen. But that woman's husband died last week. And Jean doesn't have to be her anymore.



***The Good Girl* by Mary Kubica**

Art teacher Mia Dennett returns months after she is kidnapped, remembering little of her abduction and captivity. The story is told from the viewpoints of her mother, the detective who works her case, and the kidnapper (who never delivered her to the people who ordered the job).



***The Wife Between Us* by Greer Hendricks & Sarah Pekkanen**

A psychologically charged tale of suspense follows the unexpected twists that shape a divorce and second marriage that are anything but what they seem.