

Strange Love (Made in Michigan Writers Series)

Lisa Lenzo



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The nine stories of *Strange Love* center on Annie Zito, a smart-but-not-always-wise divorced mother, and Marly, her strong yet vulnerable daughter, as they seek and stumble upon an odd cast of boys and men. All the stories are linked and alternate between mother and daughter; and while each tale stands alone, together they make up a larger whole. The first story begins when Annie is thirty-one years old and Marly is eight and they live in a tiny apartment overlooking a marsh near Lake Michigan, and the last story ends a decade and a half later with both women on the cusp of new adventures.

Throughout these years, mother and daughter struggle with male characters: the hot-headed teenager next door, a therapist with a faulty heart, a homeless man who occupies the daughter's porch, a divorced professor trying his wings, a flatterer who becomes abusive, a brilliant and neurotic doctor, a schizophrenic photographer, an engineer in love with comedy. Yet the women also clash with each other as Annie tries to protect her child and find a lasting relationship with a man, and Marly learns how to navigate and survive the romantic and sexual arena and find her place in the larger world. Annie's deceased firstborn baby daughter is a darker thread woven through these stories, a subtle influence who is never seen but not forgotten. And in the background as well as the foreground is Annie's beloved Lake Michigan, into whose deep waters she swims to remind herself that the world is beautiful and large and on whose frozen ice she kneels, as these pages end, in a moment that is both surprising and sublime.

By turns comical and poignant, lyrical and incisive, *Strange Love* displays Lenzo's storytelling gifts at their finest. These stories will appeal to all readers of fiction.

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