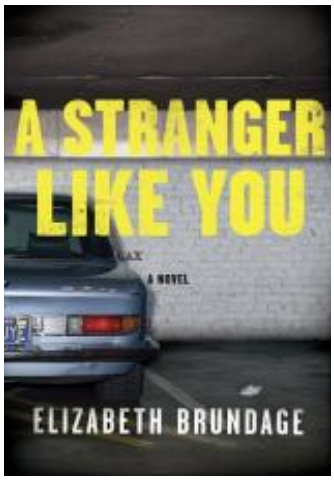
A Stranger Like You

by Elizabeth Brundage



About the Book

"Ask yourself, 'What would you do to survive?'" When Jaycee Dugard was eleven years old, she was abducted from a school bus stop within sight of her home in South Lake Tahoe, California. For more than eighteen years, Dugard was held captive by Phillip Garrido and his wife, Nancy. Dugard depended on the Garridos for everything, but she never lost hope of being reunited with her family. After she became a mom herself, Dugard knew she could never leave her daughters behind, even if that meant a lifetime in captivity.

On August 26, 2009, Phillip Garrido showed up for a meeting with his parole officer; he brought Dugard, her two daughters, and Nancy with him. After eighteen years without saying her own name, Dugard revealed her identity to the authorities. An investigation led to the complex of shacks and tents in the Garridos' backyard where Dugard had been kept for nearly two decades.

In her own plainspoken words, Dugard shares a chronological account from the time of her abduction in 1991 to her rescue in 2009 and opens up about what she experienced --- offering an extraordinary account of courage and resilience.

Discussion Guide

1. One of Brundage's many narrative techniques involves the shifting of verb tenses. Some chapters are related in the present tense, whereas others are told in the past tense. How does Brundage subtly control her story's effect on the reader by using this device?

2. The chapters of **A Stranger Like You** that are narrated from the viewpoint of Hedda Chase differ from all the others in that they are told from the grammatical standpoint of the second person; Hedda becomes "you." What do you think Brundage intends to achieve through this grammatical sleight of hand? Does she succeed?

3. A Stranger Like You is not told in chronological fashion. What do you think Brundage gains or loses in breaking free from chronological order? Would you have chosen to narrate the story's episodes in a different order? How might your treatment differ and why?

4. Brundage prefaces the main text of her novel with a page of capitalized, four-word plot premises similar to those her characters bandy back and forth in chapter nine. What do you think is the purpose of this page, and how does it relate to the remainder of the novel?

5. A relatively common technique in recent thriller novels is to conclude them with very short, rapid-fire chapters. In **A Stranger Like You**, the last third of the chapters account for just less than one seventh of the length of the novel. How does this pacing affect the reading of the end of the novel? What do you think of this technique and Brundage's use of it?

6. We are given to understand that Hugh Waters, the villain of the novel, has homosexual leanings. Is there a purpose to this aspect of his character, or did you find it gratuitous? How does Brundage's treatment of homosexual feelings compare with those in other thrillers you might have read, and what do you think of these treatments?

7. A Stranger Like You narrates the abduction of Hedda Chase twice: first from the perspective of her kidnapper (chapter one) and later from the viewpoint of the victim (chapter thirteen). What does the reader gain from the retelling that was not present the first time? How has the reader's perspective on the crime been altered by the intervening chapters?

8. Characters in **A Stranger Like You** like Hedda Chase and Harold Unger (H. Unger) have names that suggest pursuit and unsatisfied desire. What are the characters in the novel looking for, and why does it prove so elusive?

9. How does Hedda's trip to Abu Dhabi change her? What does she learn from her contact with a different culture?

10. We are given to understand that Hugh Waters's screenplay for *The Adjuster* is vulgar, exploitative, and misogynistic. How does Elizabeth Brundage manage her novel, which is largely about that screenplay, in such a way as to keep it from being subject to the same criticisms?

11. Ironically, the screenplay that actually gets someone killed in **A Stranger Like You** is not Hugh's, but Tom Foster's more socially conscious script about the stoning of an Iraqi woman, which leads to the death of Fatima Kassim. Was Foster irresponsible in writing this film? Is Hedda right when she wonders what right Americans have to judge the practices of other cultures?

12. Imagine that you are a director filming the screen version of **A Stranger Like You**. Describe in detail how you would shoot a particular scene from the book.

13. Does Hugh Waters change over the course of the novel? If so, how does he change, and how does Brundage enable us to recognize these changes?

14. What, in your view, are the necessary qualities of a great thriller novel? Applying these criteria, how favorably do you rate **A Stranger Like You**?

Author Bio

Elizabeth Brundage is the author of five novels, including ALL THINGS CEASE TO APPEAR, which was a *WSJ* best mystery of 2016, and was the basis for the Netflix film *Things Heard and Seen*. She is a graduate of the Iowa Writers? Workshop where she received a James Michener Award, and attended the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. Her writing has appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *Witness*, *New Letters*, *Greensboro Review* and elsewhere. She has taught at several colleges and universities and lives with her family in Albany, New York.

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