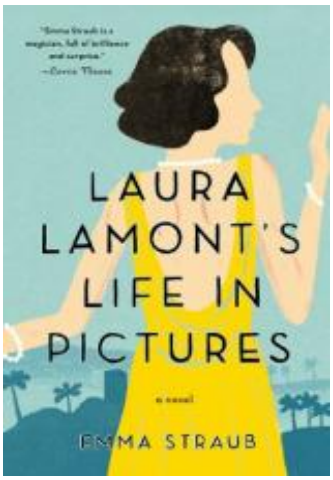
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Laura Lamont's Life in Pictures

by Emma Straub



About the Book

The enchanting story of a midwestern girl who escapes a family tragedy and is remade as a movie star during Hollywood?s golden age.

In 1920, Elsa Emerson, the youngest and blondest of three sisters, is born in idyllic Door County, Wisconsin. Her family owns the Cherry County Playhouse, and more than anything, Elsa relishes appearing onstage, where she soaks up the approval of her father and the embrace of the audience. But when tragedy strikes her family, her acting becomes more than a child¹s game of pretend.

While still in her teens, Elsa marries and flees to Los Angeles. There she is discovered by Irving Green, one of the most powerful executives in Hollywood, who refashions her as a serious, exotic brunette and renames her Laura Lamont. Irving becomes Laura?s great love; she becomes an Academy Award--winning actress --- and a genuine movie star. Laura experiences all the glamour and extravagance of the heady pinnacle of stardom in the studio-system era, but ultimately her story is a timeless one of a woman trying to balance career, family, and personal happiness, all while remaining true to herself.

Ambitious and richly imagined, LAURA LAMONT'S LIFE IN PICTURES is as intimate --- and as bigger-than-life --- as the great films of the golden age of Hollywood. Written with warmth and verve, it confirms Emma Straub?s reputation as one of the most exciting new talents in fiction.

Discussion Guide

1. ?Yes, I?m an actress,? Elsa said, except that the moment the words were out of her mouth, there on that spot on a street that existed only in the movies, she wasn?t Elsa Emerson anymore, at least not all of her. ?I?m Laura Lamont? (p. 58). What does it mean for Elsa to become Laura Lamont? How does her new name change the way she feels about

herself?

2. How is Elsa?s relationship with Gordon different from Laura?s relationship with Irving, and how does Elsa/Laura?s shifting identity affect her two marriages?

3. Laura Lamont becomes a movie star in the studio system era. How do Hollywood and the lives of its actors, producers, and directors change over the course of the novel?

4. How do Laura?s friendships contribute to her happiness?

5. How do sibling relationships function in the novel?

6. What sacrifices is Laura forced to make for success? Does her ambition affect her personal happiness?

7. How do you think the choices have changed for contemporary actresses in Hollywood? What might Laura?s life have been like if she moved to California now?

Author Bio

Emma Straub is the *New York Times* bestselling author of seven books for adults: the novels AMERICAN FANTASY, THIS TIME TOMORROW, ALL ADULTS HERE, THE VACATIONERS, MODERN LOVERS, LAURA LAMONT'S LIFE IN PICTURES, and the short story collection OTHER PEOPLE WE MARRIED. She is also the author of three picture books: GAGA MISTAKE DAY, which she co-wrote with her mother; MAMA HUG; and VERY GOOD HATS. She is a Guggenheim Foundation Fellow, and her work has been published in more than 20 languages. Emma and her husband own Books Are Magic, an independent bookstore in Brooklyn, New York.

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