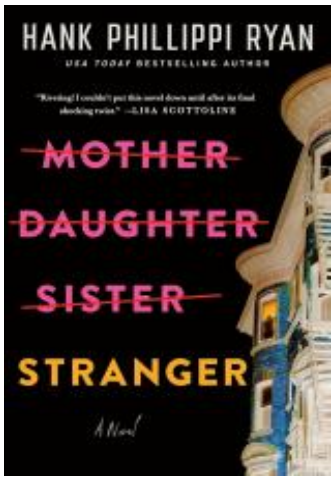
Mother Daughter Sister Stranger

by Hank Phillippi Ryan



About the Book

What if your own family history turns out to be a terrifying lie? Every family has its story, and this one?s deadly. Two sisters. One secret. And a race against time to find the explosive truth in this twisty and captivating thriller by *USA Today* bestselling author Hank Phillippi Ryan.

The sole survivors of the fiery plane crash that killed their parents, Eliza Ramsey and her sister, Bea, share an unbreakable bond. But now, on the 11th anniversary of the tragedy, Bea fails to retrieve her preteen daughter from a sleepover at Eliza?s.

Eliza knows her sister would never leave her precious Piper behind, and she fears the worst. But did Bea plan her own disappearance?

The Ramseys? lives have already crashed and burned once. Now, Eliza discovers she's the only one who can protect her niece from the horrifying legacy of her family?s sinister history. Together, the two must prevent their lives from going up in flames once again.

A missing mother. Her frightened daughter. And a sister on a desperate search for a happy ending. But someone knows the deadly key to their shared past and won?t stop until they?ve written a devastating final chapter. Mother, daughter, sister --- stranger.

Discussion Guide

1. Eliza discovers her father had a secret life as a writer, one that he had not told her about. And his topic was something he knew she would have been interested in. Do you think your parents kept personal secrets from you?

2. Is there anything your parents told you about your family history that you discovered later was not true? Why do you think they kept that from you?

3. The Berkshires are an absolutely gorgeous part of Western Massachusetts. Have you ever been there? Like many towns where the population expands with tourists for the summer, year-round residents have a complicated relationship with outsiders. What is your experience with that kind of dynamic? Do you think about the locals in the towns you visit for just a couple of weeks, or how do you feel about visitors who come to your town?

4. Eliza and Bea are the sole survivors of the plane crash that killed their parents. How do you think that affects their relationship? Bea is the older sister, but which sister do you relate to more? Bea, the influencer/mom? Or Eliza, the single, childless professional woman? What would be the first thing you?d do if you thought your sister was missing?

5. Eliza visits the house on Chatham Street where she happily lived as a child, and where she later lived after her parents died. Now Bea and Piper live there, and it feels like a completely different place to her. She has a similar experience out in the Berkshires at the Mallard Cove cottage, a place she once loved but that now feels dangerous. Did it make you think about how places can be colored by our emotions? And by our fears? When you return to places from your childhood, how does it make you feel, and why?

6. Aunt Margaret had her own reasons for doing what she did. What do you think about her choices? Could you see that her sister, Faith --- Eliza?s mother --- had a detrimental effect on her? Do you think she was jealous of Faith?

7. The title MOTHER DAUGHTER SISTER STRANGER applies to all of us in one way or another. Which roles do you play in life, and how are you different as you play them? Do you ever feel that anyone in your family is a stranger to you?

8. Are you an aunt to anyone? What did you think about Eliza?s relationship to little Piper? What do you think her decisions about what to tell her niece revealed about Eliza? Piper, at age 11, was faced with a potentially disastrous future. What if something terrible happened to her mother? Did you care about Piper? What did you think of her, and what did you love about her?

9. As brusque and demanding as she is, book agent Whitney Hart begins as Eliza?s role model --- until Eliza begins to harbor some disturbing suspicions about her. And then she realizes that their initial meeting was not a coincidence. What did you think about Whitney? What about her surprised you? Did you ever have a difficult boss? Did you commiserate with Eliza? Did you share her suspicions?

10. Eliza is Whitney?s apprentice and specializes in romance because she is reassured that there will always be a happy ending. Do you think every book should have a happy ending? Have you ever made up new endings to books you love like Eliza does? What did you think about her ?Endings? game with Piper?

11. Speaking of happy endings, what made you happy about the ending of this book?

Author Bio

Hank Phillippi Ryan is the *USA Today* bestselling author of 18 thrillers, including ONE WRONG WORD and ALL THIS COULD BE YOURS, the 2026 Mary Higgins Clark Award winner, and now nominated for the 2026 Anthony Award for Best Novel.

Hank has won every major award in the mystery genre, with her thrillers translated into multiple languages worldwide. Her fiction is inspired by a lifetime of investigating true crime during her storied career as an on-air reporter for Boston?s WHDH-TV, where she was awarded multiple honors for her groundbreaking journalism, including an unprecedented 37 Emmys.

Her work has resulted in new laws, people sent to prison, homes removed from foreclosure, and millions of dollars in refunds and restitution for victims. A TedX speaker and in-demand literary moderator, she has been called ?a superb and gifted storyteller.? (*Library Journal*)

A Chicago native with roots in Indianapolis, Ryan lives in Boston with her husband, a nationally renowned civil rights and criminal defense attorney.

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