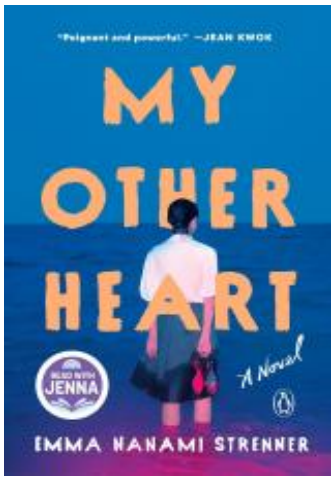
My Other Heart

by Emma Nanami Strenner



About the Book

A missing child, two girls in search of their true identities --- a stunning novel of mothers, daughters and best friends.

In June 1998, Mimi Truang is on her way home to Vietnam when her toddler daughter vanishes in the Philadelphia airport.

Seventeen years later, two best friends in Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania, discuss their summer plans before college. Kit, with the support of her white adoptive parents, will travel to Tokyo to explore her Japanese roots. This dizzying adventure offers her a taste of first love and a new understanding of what it means to belong.

Sabrina had hoped to take a similar trip to China, but money is tight. Her disappointment subsides, however, when she meets a bold, uncompromising new mentor who prompts Sabrina to ask questions she?s avoided all her life. Meanwhile, Mimi purchases a plane ticket to Philadelphia. She finally has a lead in her search for her daughter.

When Mimi, Kit and Sabrina come face to face, they will confront the people they truly are, in this tremendously moving novel that is propelled to its astonishing climax in a way you will never forget.

Discussion Guide

1. In the opening scene of MY OTHER HEART, Mimi is in the airport, in transit. How does this image --- of waiting, of being between two places, of liminal space --- show up throughout the novel?

2. The journey of motherhood is depicted through multiple characters in the novel. Some mothers are not biologically connected to their daughters, others are physically separated, still others are not technically parents at all but fill a

meaningful maternal role. Consider Mimi, Sally, Lee Lee, Eva, Yuriko. How do you see each of them acting as mothers? In what ways do they influence the younger characters?

3. What do you think prompted Sabrina, normally a quiet student, to deliver such a powerful and personal monologue in drama class?

4. Kit and Sabrina both plan for the summer before college to be filled with adventure and self-actualization. Their summers don?t turn out the way they expected, but each girl does indeed experience challenge and growth. Did you have a similarly formative summer when you were an adolescent?

5. Dave and Sabrina?s relationship changes throughout the novel. How does their individual growth allow their friendship to grow?

6. Discuss the title MY OTHER HEART. Why do you think Emma Nanami Strenner chose this title? How do the main characters connect to this idea of another part of themselves --- a part that can feel both close and far away?

7. How do you think Amy?s friendship influenced Kit? In what ways was Amy a different type of friend than Sabrina was?

8. Though this novel is set in multiple countries, Chestnut Hill and Philadelphia are the only places that every character has in common. How has the city affected each of the characters --- from Kit and Sabrina to Yuriko to Eva, and so on?

9. Were you surprised that Kit and Ryo?s relationship didn?t last into their first year of college? Kit gives Sabrina a long-winded explanation as to why they broke up --- distance, personality differences and identity. How did you interpret Kit?s explanation? What do you think the most important factors in their breakup likely were?

10. Belonging is at the heart of this story. Do you think Kit and Sabrina found a sense of belonging by the end of the story? And how do their journeys differ?

11. What part of the story was the most emotionally moving for you? Did the end surprise you?

Author Bio

Emma Nanami Strenner is British Japanese and has a degree in Modern Chinese Studies from the University of Leeds. She has worked as a journalist for almost 20 years and as a section editor for *Vogue International*, *Elle* and *Stylist*. She spent most of her life living abroad in Japan, Vietnam, Australia, China, Singapore and the United States. MY OTHER HEART is her debut novel.

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