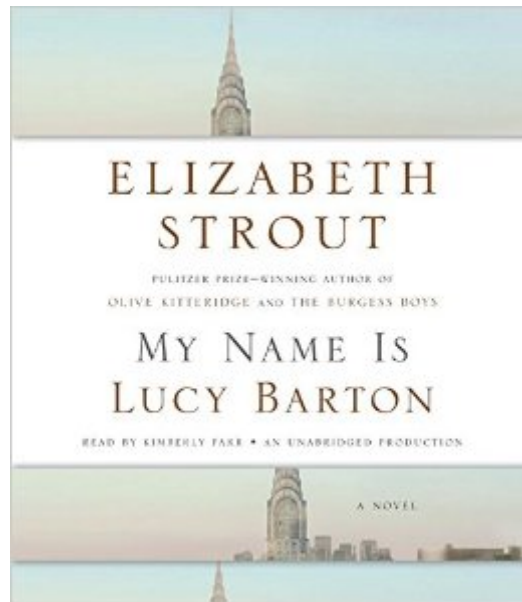


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My Name Is Lucy Barton: A Novel



Synopsis

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • A LONGLISTED FOR THE MAN BOOKER PRIZE

A simple hospital visit becomes a portal to the tender relationship between mother and daughter in this extraordinary novel by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Olive Kitteridge* and *The Burgess Boys*. Lucy Barton is recovering slowly from what should have been a simple operation. Her mother, to whom she hasn't spoken for many years, comes to see her. Gentle gossip about people from Lucy's childhood in Amgash, Illinois, seems to reconnect them, but just below the surface lie the tension and longing that have informed every aspect of Lucy's life: her escape from her troubled family, her desire to become a writer, her marriage, her love for her two daughters. Knitting this powerful narrative together is the brilliant storytelling voice of Lucy herself: keenly observant, deeply human, and truly unforgettable.

Praise for *My Name Is Lucy Barton*

“There is not a scintilla of sentimentality in this exquisite novel. Instead, in its careful words and vibrating silences, *My Name Is Lucy Barton* offers us a rare wealth of emotion, from darkest suffering to ‘I was so happy. Oh, I was happy’—simple joy.” —Claire Messud, *The New York Times Book Review*

“Spectacular . . . Smart and cagey in every way. It is both a book of withholdings and a book of great openness and wisdom. . . . [Strout] is in supreme and magnificent command of this novel at all times.” —Lily King, *The Washington Post*

“A short novel about love, particularly the complicated love between mothers and daughters, but also simpler, more sudden bonds . . . It evokes these connections in a style so spare, so pure and so profound the book almost seems to be a kind of scripture or sutra, if a very down-to-earth and unpretentious one.” —Marion Winik, *Newsday*

“Potent with distilled emotion. Without a hint of self-pity, Strout captures the ache of loneliness we all feel sometimes.” —*Time*

“An aching, illuminating look at mother-daughter devotion.” —*People*

“A quiet, sublimely merciful contemporary novel about love, yearning, and resilience in a family damaged beyond words.” —*The Boston Globe*

“Sensitive, deceptively simple . . . It is Lucy's gentle honesty, complex relationship with her husband, and nuanced response to her mother's shortcomings that make this novel so subtly powerful. . . . [It's] more complex than it first appears, and all the more emotionally persuasive for it.” —*San Francisco Chronicle*

“Strout maps the complex terrain of human relationships by focusing on that which is often unspoken and only implied. . . . A powerful addition to Strout's body of work.” —*The Seattle Times*

“Impressionistic and haunting . . . [Strout] reminds us of the power of our stories—and our ability to transcend our troubled narratives.” —*Miami Herald*

“Writing of this quality comes from a commitment to listening, from a perfect attunement to the human condition, from an attention to reality so exact that it goes beyond a skill and becomes a

virtue.â •â "Hilary Mantel â œMagnificent.â •â "Ann PatchettFrom the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lucy Barton is looking back, processing various events from her life--most of them fairly awful. That time when her mom visited her in the hospital when she was so sick. That time her dad humiliated her brother, calling him a "f*cking fagg*t" in front of everyone after he was caught trying on Mom's high heels. That time her parents locked her in the truck with a snake. All that time when she and her family lived in her uncle's cold, cold garage. Lucy is soft, sweet, likable, kind--that much is clear right away. She's wounded, and, despite the fact that she's older, married with kids, and enjoying moderate success as a writer, she's still walking around shell-shocked by childhood traumas. I kept picturing Lucy as an injured kitten mewling helplessly in the street, and I wanted to take care of her. From the first few pages, I readied myself to settle in and hear it all. Tell me everything, Lucy. Mew away. And Lucy has some interesting things to say, especially about dysfunctional and abusive families--things I understand and identify with, truthfully. She's insightful and honest, and it's obvious that Lucy wants to be strong. She wants to be OKAY. But she's also so desperate to be loved, to be seen--especially by her mother--that sometimes she keeps the truth tucked neatly away. In fact, she'd rather forgive her mom everything than acknowledge that her mom is capable of so much cruelty. (The moments when Lucy essentially begs for her mother's paltry scraps of affection are tough to read.

My Name is Lucy Barton was a hard book to review because I found myself disagreeing with the

main premise of the book and not being at all fond of the main character. After Strout's luminous writing in *Olive Kitteridge*, I've looked forward to reading each new novel from her. If, like me, you are expecting writing that resembles *Olive Kitteridge*, you will be disappointed in this book. While this is another story about a family with its own issues, *Lucy Barton* is narrated in the first person by the main character in an amateurish style resembling a beginning writer's first work. That is exactly what it is supposed to be - an autobiography of sorts written by the main character. In that, it is an interesting read. However, Lucy's story is full of gaps and untold secrets. There are clues of an abusive childhood - or of perceived abuse - but Lucy never does reveal what exactly went on in her poverty stricken family. There are further hints of a father suffering from PTSD but the embarrassment is only clearly spoken of once. Chapters are often very short focusing on events and people in Lucy's life. In relationships with other people Lucy is hungry for connection to an uncomfortable extent. A character that reappears often is the unnamed doctor who Lucy seems to see as a father figure. Ostensibly, the novel centers on Lucy's relationship with her mother and a time when her mother came to stay with her while Lucy lay sick in a hospital. The relationship is an odd one with Lucy's feelings towards her mother swinging from one extreme to the other. At all times, though, she remains the needy child still trying to gain her rather cold parent's approval.

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