

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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Emma Straub is the New York Times-bestselling author of three other novels *The Vacationers*, *Modern Lovers*, *Laura Lamont's Life in Pictures*, and the short story collection *Other People We Married*. Her books have been published in twenty countries. She and her husband own Books Are Magic, an independent bookstore in Brooklyn, New York.

- Author's website

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. What were your expectations prior to reading this book? Did it meet them, exceed them, or fall short?
2. Which character did you identify with the most? Any characters you couldn't stand?
3. Discuss the examples you see in this particular multi-generational family, or in your own life, of the ways that children can repeat or mutate the strengths and the mistakes that their parents handed down to them.
4. Astrid thinks about the role that birth order has played in the personalities of her three children, and how their own individual childhood experiences have helped to shape the adults they have become. To what degree do you think she is correct in her conclusions about the forces that shaped her children? In what ways are the choices they have made as adults reflective of their younger selves? How much do you think birth order plays a role?
5. Why does Astrid choose to tell her children about her relationship with Birdie when she does? What results from that conversation? Why does she keep this relationship from her kids for as long as she does? Do you think Birdie becomes part of the Strick family over the course of the novel?

6. Compare and contrast Nicky and Juliette’s marriage with Elliot and Wendy’s. How are these two couples portrayed?
7. In what ways does Rachel provide Porter with certain aspects of partnership? How does Porter value her relationship with Rachel and how do her feelings change over the course of the book?
8. What do Cecelia and August understand about forgiveness that the older characters do not? How do they provide the adults with a model for how to be true to yourself and what you believe?
9. Which passage stuck with you the most?
10. What do you think the title—All Adults Here—means in context to the story?
11. Would you recommend this book to someone? Who and why?

- <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/318841/all-adults-here-by-emma-straub/9781594634697/readers-guide/>

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### Booklist

*/\* Starred Review \*/* The sudden death of a frenemy, hit by a school bus, knocks widowed Strick family matriarch Astrid's own life slightly off course. Her granddaughter, middle-schooler Cecelia, arrives from Brooklyn, escaping friend drama for a school year in Astrid's small Hudson Valley town. Just in time, it turns out, for Astrid to announce to the whole family that her best friend, Birdie, is much more than that: she is her lover. Porter, Astrid's daughter, harbors her own exciting secret. As in Straub's (*Modern Lovers*, 2016) other novels, the joy is in the setup, and, in a way, it's all setup. As Astrid gathers the courage to apologize to her oldest son, Elliott, for a long-ago wrong, Elliott's concerns are altogether elsewhere. As these and other characters in the multigenerational cast confront milestones of many measures, including a sweet arc for Cecelia's transgender best friend, Straub etches in the comforting, often funny truths readers love her for. Like us, her characters are always getting older but never feeling quite old enough to do the right thing, to be the people they want to be, to let go of the past, and they're certainly never ready to die. An all-out celebration of the life force in ourselves and in our families. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Straub's novels are dearly beloved, and this might be her best yet. -- Annie Bostrom (Reviewed 3/1/2020) (Booklist, vol 116, number 13, p20).

### Publisher’s Weekly

*/\* Starred Review \*/* In Straub’s witty, topical fourth novel (after *Modern Lovers*), members of a Hudson Valley family come to terms with adolescence, aging, sexuality, and gender. After 68-year-old widow Astrid Strick witnesses an acquaintance get struck and killed by a bus in the center of Clapham, N.Y., she feels compelled to come clean with her children about her new relationship with Birdie, the local hairdresser, before it's too late (“there were always more school buses,” she reasons). Astrid’s kids have their own issues to contend with. Thirty-seven-

year-old Porter, pregnant via a “stud farm” (aka a sperm bank), is having an affair with her old high school boyfriend, while Elliott, the oldest, is preoccupied with a hush-hush business proposal. Nicky, the youngest, and his wife have shipped their only child, 13-year-old Cecilia, up to live with Astrid after a messy incident at her Brooklyn school involving online pedophilia. Despite Cecilia’s fear of not fitting in, she finds friendship with a boy who longs to be recognized as a girl but isn’t ready to come out as trans. As per usual, Straub’s writing is heartfelt and earnest, without tipping over the edge. There are a lot of issues at play here (abortion, bullying, IVF, gender identity, sexual predators) that Straub easily juggles, and her strong and flawed characters carry the day. This affecting family saga packs plenty of punch. (May) --Staff (Reviewed 02/03/2020) (Publishers Weekly, vol 267, issue 5, p).

### Library Journal

Life is usually pretty tranquil in Clapham, a small Hudson Valley town that gets a fair share of summer tourists, but Astrid Strick is badly shaken up after she witnesses a school bus accident involving a longtime acquaintance. She's been a widow for years, and her three adult children find her somewhat distant. Now she decides it's time to reveal a big secret in her life. Her daughter Porter has a secret of her own, a torrid affair with a former (married) boyfriend, though she is pregnant thanks to an anonymous sperm donor. Older son Elliot and his wife are trying to cope with hyperactive toddler twins, while younger son Nicky, who lives in Brooklyn, has sent daughter Cecelia to live with her grandmother for a while. The title is ironic in that 13-year-old Cecelia often seems to be more adult than her parents or her aunt and uncle. VERDICT In this engaging novel, Straub (*The Vacationers*) explores the ups and downs of a somewhat disaffected 21st-century family with warmth, sympathy, and humor. [See Prepub Alert, 4/11/19.]—Leslie Patterson, Rehoboth, MA --Leslie Patterson (Reviewed 05/01/2020) (Library Journal, vol 145, issue 5, p114).

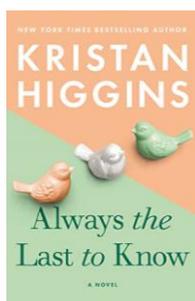
### Kirkus Reviews

When Astrid Strick witnesses a school bus run over a longtime acquaintance of hers—Barbara Baker, a woman she doesn't like very much—it's only the beginning of the shake-ups to come in her life and the lives of those she loves. Astrid has been tootling along contentedly in the Hudson Valley town of Clapham, New York, a 68-year-old widow with three grown children. After many years of singlehood since her husband died, she's been quietly seeing Birdie Gonzalez, her hairdresser, for the past two years, and after Barbara's death she determines to tell her children about the relationship: "There was no time to waste, not in this life. There were always more school buses." Elliot, her oldest, who's in real estate, lives in Clapham with his wife, Wendy, who's Chinese American, and their twins toddlers, Aidan and Zachary, who are "such hellions that only a fool would willingly ask for more." Astrid's daughter, Porter, owns a nearby farm producing artisanal goat cheese and has just gotten pregnant through a sperm bank while having an affair with her married high school boyfriend. Nicky, the youngest Strick, is disconcertingly famous for having appeared in an era-defining movie when he was younger and now lives in Brooklyn with his French wife, Juliette, and their daughter, Cecelia, who's being

shipped up to live with Astrid for a while after her friend got mixed up with a pedophile she met online. As always, Straub (*Modern Lovers*, 2016, etc.) draws her characters warmly, making them appealing in their self-centeredness and generosity, their insecurity and hope. The cast is realistically diverse, though in most ways it's fairly superficial; the fact that Birdie is Latina or Porter's obstetrician is African American doesn't have much impact on the story or their characters. Cecelia's new friend, August, wants to make the transition to Robin; that storyline gets more attention, with the two middle schoolers supporting each other through challenging times. The Stricks worry about work, money, sex, and gossip; Straub has a sharp eye for her characters' foibles and the details of their liberal, upper-middle-class milieu. With humor and insight, Straub creates a family worth rooting for. (Kirkus Reviews, March 1, 2020).

## READALIKES

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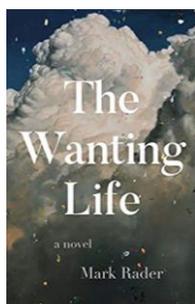
*Always the Last to Know* by Kristin Higgins

After their father suffers a stroke, two sisters must return home and deal with the paths both their lives have taken as well as their parents' relationship.



*The Arrivals* by Meg Mitchell Moore

Ginny and William's peaceful life in Vermont comes to an abrupt halt as their children and grandchildren descend one summer with an assortment of adult problems. By summer's end, the family gains new ideas of loyalty and responsibility, exposing the challenges of surviving the modern family--and the old adage, once a parent, always a parent, has never rung so true.



*The Wanting Life* by Mark Rader

Set in Rome, Cape Cod, and Wisconsin over the course of the summer of 2009, and Rome during the spring of 1970, *The Wanting Life* tells the intertwined story of three members of the Novak family: Father Paul, a closeted gay Catholic priest who's dying of cancer and has secrets he desperately wants to share; Britta, his self-destructive sister and caretaker, who's struggling to find meaning in a world without her beloved husband; and Maura, Britta's daughter—a thirty-nine-year-old artist who's facing a choice between her husband and two children, or the man she believes is her one, true love.