



## Little Stranger (Lannan Literary Selections)

By Lisa Olstein

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### Little Stranger (Lannan Literary Selections) By Lisa Olstein

Lisa Olstein's third collection reverberates with twinned realities: wonder and terror, beauty and difficulty, celebration and lament. Through encounters with science, war, art, animals, and motherhood, *Little Stranger* explores the exigencies of close attention, the tenuousness of attachment, and the ever more rapidly shifting nature of knowledge. Intimate lyrics, elegies, and narratives speak in voices familiar yet strange.

Lisa Olstein's debut collection of poetry, *Radio Crackling, Radio Gone* (Copper Canyon Press, 2006), won the Hayden Carruth Award, and her second volume, *Lost Alphabet* (Copper Canyon Press, 2009), was named a "Best Poetry Book of the Year" by *Library Journal*. She lives in Amherst, Massachusetts.

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### Editorial Review

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In her third collection, Olstein considers nature, faith, motherhood, and even the media with authority. “The anchorwoman’s hair / makes sense next to / the other anchorwoman’s hair,” a speaker calmly observes in “This Waking Life.” In “Blood, Bread, Spoons,” the queen of England is forgiven for eating the “people’s gold for breakfast” because “it’s the only thing / her stomach understands.” Deer dart in and out, leaving tracks that both comfort and concern those who find them. Companionship may be found in nature, Olstein suggests, but epiphanies are just as difficult to achieve there as within interpersonal relationships. In “Different Habitats Make for Good Neighbors,” a metaphysical take on Frost, Olstein offers a somewhat predictable scene of a nighttime forest, then stuns the reader with questions about faith that streak like comets through the poem. Olstein’s repetitions of images and words become echoes of a fierce conversation with the universe. These lines from one the collection’s strongest poems aptly describe the collection’s cumulative effect: “Hit something hard, hit something soft, / sit by a glowing window and watch / the lighted storm swim by.” --Carolyn Alessio

#### About the Author

Lisa Olstein’s debut collection of poetry *Radio Crackling, Radio Gone* (Copper Canyon, 2006) won the Hayden Carruth Award, and her second volume, *Lost Alphabet* (Copper Canyon, 2009), was named a “Best Poetry Book of the Year” by *Library Journal*. After receiving her BA from Barnard College, Olstein lived in Greece and studied at Harvard Divinity School before deciding to pursue an MFA at University of Massachusetts Amherst. She currently serves as Associate Director of MFA program for Poets and Writers at University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she cofounded the Juniper Initiative for Literary Arts & Action and is a contributing editor at *jubilat*. She lives in Amherst, Massachusetts.

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