

***Tell Me Everything*, by Elizabeth Strout**

Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy

Prolific author Elizabeth Strout is perhaps best known for writing *Olive Kitteridge*, her Fiction Pulitzer Prize winner. Olive, that novel's endearing and exasperating title character, reprises her role in *Tell Me Everything*, Ms. Strout's tenth book, which also is set in Crosby, a coastal Maine town.

Tell Me Everything features returning characters from other Strout novels. Jim and Bob—the Burgess brothers—grew up in rural Maine and became New York City attorneys. A childhood tragedy had put a lifelong strain on their relationship. Bob moved back to Maine after he married his second wife, Margaret, a Unitarian minister.

Lucy Barton, a successful fiction writer, had relocated to Crosby from Manhattan with her former husband William during the Covid pandemic. Lucy, who had grown up in extreme poverty in Illinois, had met William, a parasitologist, in college. They remained friends after their divorce.

The local townspeople had mixed feelings about Manhattanites remaining in Crosby after the pandemic's lockdown was lifted: "The natural reticence towards New Yorkers was part of it, but also housing prices in Crosby had gone through the roof exactly because of people like Lucy Barton. Anyone from Maine who had been hoping to move into a nicer home found they could not afford one. On Main Street there were Help Wanted signs in most store windows, and along the coastline a few restaurants had to close because there were not enough people to work in them. What had gone wrong? They only knew the world was not what it once had been."

Olive, now 90 and living in a retirement community called Maple Tree Apartments, wanted to meet Lucy Barton. During the pandemic, Bob Burgess and Lucy had become friends, taking long walks together and talking about their fears and regrets. After Bob introduces Lucy to Olive, the two women meet often to tell each other stories about "unrecorded lives." Getting to know Lucy, Olive senses that Lucy and Bob are developing strong feelings for one another.

Although Bob is semi-retired from his law practice, he takes on a criminal case that has shocked the community. The body of an elderly woman was found in a quarry, and her son, Matt Beach, is suspected of murder. Bob steps in to represent the troubled young man.

Tell Me Everything is an introspective novel, more focused on the characters' innermost thoughts than on plot development. While Ms. Strout's tender tome might not appeal to readers new to her books, her loyal fanbase will cherish it.