



Cities I've Never Lived In: Stories

By Sara Majka

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In subtle, sensuous prose, the stories in Sara Majka's debut collection explore distance in all its forms: the emotional spaces that open up between family members, friends, and lovers; the gaps that emerge between who we were and who we are; the gulf between our private and public selves. At the center of the collection is a series of stories narrated by a young American woman in the wake of a divorce; wry and shy but never less than open to the world, she recalls the places and people she has been close to, the dreams she has pursued and those she has left unfulfilled. Interspersed with these intimate first-person stories are stand-alone pieces where the tight focus on the narrator's life gives way to closely observed accounts of the lives of others. A book about belonging, and how much of yourself to give up in the pursuit of that, *Cities I've Never Lived In* offers stories that reveal, with great sadness and great humor, the ways we are most of all citizens of the places where we cannot be.

Cities I've Never Lived In is the second book in Graywolf's collaboration with the literary magazine *A Public Space*.

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Cities I've Never Lived In: Stories By Sara Majka Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

*A *Chicago Tribune* Winter/Spring book pick and one of *The Millions'* most anticipated books of 2016*

“Majka brings the reader to startling places. . . . From certain angles, it’s a kind of New England gothic, where the lost children and dead women and doppelgängers serve to add atmosphere and meaning to the narrator’s past peregrinations, her dalliances and uncertainties. It turns out in the end that this is in fact a book about an arty person with a complicated personal life. But it’s a lovely one, written in a moving and uncanny register.”? *The New York Times Book Review*

“Arresting. . . . These are modest-seeming stories that hold deep truths, by a writer of great promise.”? *The New York Times Book Review*

“Graceful.”? *Oprah Magazine*

“I still can’t get some of [Majka’s] perfect assessments of the human condition out of my head. Her writing is matter-of-fact (thought very beautiful), and her characters are sad, occasionally desperate. . . . She’s incredibly effective.”? *The Cut*

“If you’ve ever fantasized about ditching town for unknown corners of the U.S., this debut collection of short stories is sure to satisfy your curiosity.”? *Refinery 29*

“Majka’s voice and world are wholly her own. A real feeling of warmth and nostalgia lifts these stories above the ordinary.”? *Kenyon Review*

“Beautiful and poetic.”? *Rain Taxi Review of Books*

“Precision, beauty, and reality meld in Majka's captivating stories, which feature characters who live in obscurity on society's fringes.”? *Shelf Awareness*

“Majka has a talent for a striking observation.”? *Kirkus Review*

“A human and eloquent exploration of isolation.”? *Publishers Weekly*

“Majka’s stories gently remind us that we take our preoccupations with us wherever we go as we follow the narrator to vividly rendered places from the shoreline towns of Maine to small islands, from decaying Midwestern cities to Greenpoint by the BQE. The prose is lucid and spare, with crystalline moments of gut-punching insight on every page.”? *Electric Literature*

“Majka is a great line-maker who can kill you in just a few words.”? *LitReactor*

“Whether traversing mainland or islands, on terra firma or cut adrift, Majka's narrator is wonderfully sympathetic. We see her, and others, battling loneliness and existing 'a while without love,' without ever sinking into self-pity. With great beauty and subtlety these 14 interlinked tales speak volumes about 'what happens when what makes life possible disappears.’”? *The Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“Sara Majka’s prose is the star in this debut collection of linked short stories, which follow a young New England woman rebuilding her life post-divorce. Majka’s words find a way to tear at your insides as they come together to form a vivid picture of isolation. Deeply moving, these stories are the kind that’ll make you stare straight into that roaring fire while you think hard about what’s important to you.” ***Elle Magazine***

“This amazing debut short story collection explores distance in all its forms. . . . This is a book filled with stunning craft and transportive stories. Subtle and intimate, Majka’s writing will reach all the way into you, plucking at your very core.” ***Bustle***

“A man leaves a woman; a woman leaves a man; in bars, hostels, and even soup kitchens, people search for connection. . . . Every story [in *Cities I’ve Never Lived In*] comes back to the themes that occupy the young narrator’s mind the most: loneliness and loss, the in-between spaces of life, and the struggle to understand ourselves and the people around us.” ***Booklist***

“There’s an observational quality to these stories that makes them feel lived and are packed with truths that wouldn’t feel out of place in a personal essay. . . . That’s the beauty of Majka’s voice: a dreary day turns Gothic, ordinary loss transforms into something wise, even if we never quite make it to the place we’re striving to reach.” ***San Diego CityBeat***

“There is a quiet, meditative reflection of beautiful language, emotion and unsolvable mysteries of life that had me rereading passages over and over.” ***The Daily Dosage***

“These stories are a marvel that will break your heart. . . . Majka’s debut is breath-stopping.” **A.N. Devers, *Longreads***

“*Cities I’ve Never Lived In* is my favorite kind of story collection—one that strikes many, many delicate balances. It’s both comforting and spooky, dreamlike and surprisingly frank, clear-eyed and slyly supernatural, and often all simultaneously.” ***Callie Collins, American Short Fiction***

“These stories are sparse and fierce and move elegantly to the very heart of the reader. The voice remains with me, has left an emotional trace like a person I lived with and loved and often recall.” **Catherine Lacey, author of *Nobody is Ever Missing***

“A collection that leaves you longing—as one longs to return to much loved, much missed homes and communities and cities—for places that you, the reader have never been. Prodigal with insight into why and how people love and leave, and love again. Humane, dazzling, and knowing.” ***Kelly Link, author of Magic for Beginners***

“Like Alice Munro and Raymond Carver, Sara Majka writes stories of people on society’s ragged edge—in money trouble, work trouble, heart trouble—and does so with tremendous subtlety and a grave sophistication all her own. Every one of the spare sentences in this book is heavy with implication and insight. It’s impossible to read these stories too closely.” ***Salvatore Scibona, author of The End***

“I cannot remember a book that more perfectly achieves the sensation of, as Majka describes, ‘being nowhere, or in someone else’s life, or between lives.’ With each subsequent story, the feeling intensified until, as only the very best writing can do, I felt transformed by the experience. *Cities I’ve Never Lived In* is a momentous book, and Majka is a writer operating at a very high level of insight.” ***Kevin Wilson, author of The Family Fang***

“*Cities I’ve Never Lived In* is like no other book I’ve read: graceful and poignant, original and wise. Its stories unfold in the bars, thrift stores, and rented rooms of a Maine you won’t find in tourist guidebooks or

outdoor catalogs, but their deeper territory is the human heart: loss and loneliness, desire and grief, and the strange beauty to be found in desolation. Like the memories that haunt her watchful, wounded characters, Sara Majka's exquisite prose stayed with me long after I had turned the last page of this terrific debut."?Mia Alvar, author of *In the Country*

"This is a beautiful and destabilizing book filled with ghosts. Majka is a writer I'd read anything by."?Diane Cook, author of *Man Vs. Nature*

"The characters in Sara Majka's haunting collection drift through cities and landscapes like refugees from feeling, searching for something they can't begin to name. These stories confound all our expectations: they fade in and out like memories or dreams, at once indelible and impossible to grasp. Again and again they broke my heart. Majka is a daring and enormously gifted writer, and this is a thrilling, devastating debut."?Garth Greenwell, author of *What Belongs to You*

About the Author

Sara Majka's stories have appeared in *A Public Space*, *PEN America*, *The Gettysburg Review*, and *Guernica*. A former fiction fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, she lives in Queens, New York.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jeffery Fulmer:

This *Cities I've Never Lived In: Stories* book is not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you will get by reading this book is information inside this publication incredible fresh, you will get data which is getting deeper you actually read a lot of information you will get. This specific *Cities I've Never Lived In: Stories* without we know teach the one who examining it become critical in imagining and analyzing. Don't always be worry *Cities I've Never Lived In: Stories* can bring when you are and not make your tote space or bookshelves' become full because you can have it in your lovely laptop even cellphone. This *Cities I've Never Lived In: Stories* having excellent arrangement in word as well as layout, so you will not really feel uninterested in reading.

Nettie Powers:

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Catherine Stevenson:

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