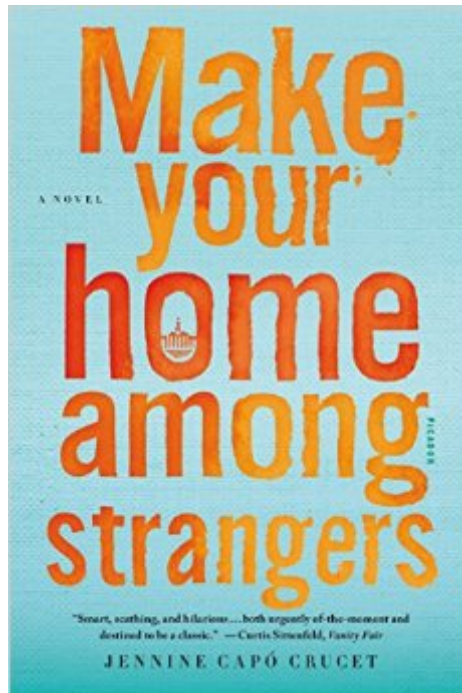


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# Make Your Home Among Strangers: A Novel



## Synopsis

A New York Times Book Review Editor's Choice, winner of the International Latino Book Award for Best Latino-themed Fiction 2016, Longlisted for the 2015 Center for Fiction First Novel Prize. Named a best book of the season by Cosmopolitan, Vanity Fair, Harper's Bazaar, Redbook, Bustle, NBC Latino and Men's Journal. The arresting debut novel from award-winning writer Jennine Capó Crucet. When Lizet—the daughter of Cuban immigrants and the first in her family to graduate from high school—secretly applies and is accepted to an ultra-elite college, her parents are furious at her decision to leave Miami. Just weeks before she's set to start school, her parents divorce and her father sells her childhood home, leaving Lizet, her mother, and Leidy—Lizet's older sister, a brand-new single mom—without a steady income and scrambling for a place to live. Amidst this turmoil, Lizet begins her first semester at Rawlings College, distracted by both the exciting and difficult moments of freshman year. But the privileged world of the campus feels utterly foreign, as does her new awareness of herself as a minority. Struggling both socially and academically, she returns to Miami for a surprise Thanksgiving visit, only to be overshadowed by the arrival of Ariel Hernandez, a young boy whose mother died fleeing with him from Cuba on a raft. The ensuing immigration battle puts Miami in a glaring spotlight, captivating the nation and entangling Lizet's entire family, especially her mother. Pulled between life at college and the needs of those she loves, Lizet is faced with difficult decisions that will change her life forever. Urgent and mordantly funny, *Make Your Home Among Strangers* tells the moving story of a young woman torn between generational, cultural, and political forces; it's the new story of what it means to be American today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Make Your Home Among Strangers" is one of the best new novels by a first-time author that I have read. It tells the story of the first year (actually from November to August) of college for Lizet, a bright Cuban American young woman who gained admission to Rawlings, a very competitive liberal arts college (think Williams or Cornell), for which she is woefully unprepared. One strand of the novel deals with her experiences at school, especially her feeling that she just does not fit in and will not succeed no matter what she does. As the novel begins, she is paying a surprise visit to her mother and sister in Miami for Thanksgiving. Just at this time, Ariel Hernandez (think Elian Gonzales) has been rescued from a raft on its way from Cuba to Miami. Ariel's mother dies on the way, and Ariel's relatives mount a campaign to keep him in America against the wishes of his father in Cuba. Lizet's mother is very interested in this child and his family, and as the months go by she becomes increasingly invested in the fate of little Ariel and his main caretaker, a young woman named Caridaylis. Lizet and her sister Leidy, who has a child, Dante, by her ex-boyfriend, become very concerned about their mother's mental health, as she detaches from her real family to participate in the demonstrations on behalf of Ariel and his family. This second strand is woven into Lizet's experience as she tries to figure out just who she is and where she belongs. Suddenly she seems to fit nowhere; she has no place to really call home. Her Cuban family and friends mock her intelligence and new interests; they feel that she has "forgotten where she came from" and that she thinks she is too good for them now.

Eric Selby If ever one needs to show a writing class that the only good writing comes from personal experience, then turn to new-on-the-scene Miami-born (to Cuban parents) Jennine Capó Crucet whose *How to Leave Hialeah* (why is Hialeah such a joke here in Miami-Dade County?) is a series of absolutely wonderful short stories, all about Cubans who dominate South Florida. On the whole I adore most Cubans I've met in the past two decades here in South Florida (first in Key West and now in South Beach). They give new meaning to where to park those monster vehicles they love (no more 50s vintage for them now that they crossed that 90 miles stretch of water): on the front lawn! Okay! Okay! Don't yell at me in español! Not all of them! But | So I was so delighted to discover that this young author has produced a novel based on that well-known case of Attorney General Janet Reno's (also from here): Elian Gonzalez who as a fictional character is Ariel Hernandez in the Crucet novel. The opening of the novel is so funny (except that the reality isn't): how this one Cuban-American family (representing so many others) used the canal behind their Hialeah house as their dump! (We now have pythons because the ones that outgrew

their cages were tossed out onto the back cement slab and eventually got to the Everglades. Now we have an official hunting season for them here in Florida. (I am not joking!) Lizet, a freshman at Rawlings University in up-state New York (she has a heavy dose of financial aid and gets to finally experience real snow), is from this family that dumps everything they don't want into the canal except now the house has been sold by Lizet's father who married her mother when they were teenagers. He alone sold it because it was only in his name.

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