FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

General

My Mother's Lovers (Western Literature Series)
Joy Passanante
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Unless they're remarkably well-adjusted, most teenage girls go through a period of feeling embarrassed and slightly horrified by their parents, mainly their mothers. Suddenly, the woman who once tucked them in at night begins to say and do all the wrong things, and definitely wear the wrong clothes. In this gorgeously written coming-of-age novel, teenager Lake Rose Davis has more than enough fodder for adolescent horror. Her hippie parents live in a purple house, her mother doesn't mind walking nude in front of the unshaded windows, and a Partridge Family-style bus sits in the backyard as a reminder of her parents? trippy past.

In a small town, the free ways of her mother, especially, draw whispers. To rise above the rumors, Lake finds herself imagining long stories about her mother's nonexistent lovers, trysts filled with breathy dialogue and romantic detail. When she has to leave the little, closed-minded town and live with her grandparents, Lake finds herself drawn toward finding out who her mother really is, rather than furthering the exploits of the bodice-ripping heroine of her imagination.

The author, a creative writing and literature instructor at the University of Idaho, is an established poet, and she pens this first novel with a poet's lighter, refined touch. A passage describing Lake being ill is close to lyrical: "I spent the day listless in a corner, as if the angles of the walls could protect me from the hot and cold inside me. It wasn't a very high fever? but it was my constant companion, like a devil on my shoulder, or something transplanted there, threatening to take over my body."

Despite her graceful hand, Passanante isn’t afraid to explore larger issues in her work, most notably the difficulty of mother-daughter relationships and the pain that can come with disclosures about the past. “Secrets were encoded in the blood of the women in my family,” Lake says at the novel’s start, “and like an addict, I returned to their revelations again and again.” Readers will be glad of her addiction, and of Passanante’s formidable talent.