



★ **The Fixed Stars**

Molly Wizenberg

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Molly Wizenberg lays bare her journey of self-discovery and reinvention in her raw, honest memoir *The Fixed Stars*.

It was jury duty, of all things, that made Wizenberg realize that she might not be straight. After months of denial, she and her husband agreed to open their relationship so that she could explore her new desires. Far from alleviating the problem, the new arrangement widened the cracks in their imperfect marriage, forcing Wizenberg to reassess her life and what she wanted from it.

The book's bite-sized segments flow together, resulting in an intricate, multilayered narrative. Witty observations and similes arise as Wizenberg grapples with uncertainties about her identity, marriage, and future. Astronomical metaphors recur: Wizenberg is a star yanked out of her reliable constellation by her sudden attraction to a woman she barely knows. There is no going back. Only by doing the hard work of leaving her comfort zone and asserting herself can she find contentment in a new normal.

Every person in the book, Wizenberg most of all, is made human: they are flawed, vulnerable, and resilient, and are sympathetic even in the course of making poor or selfish decisions. Watching Wizenberg's cast stumble is emotional and sometimes difficult, but people's mistakes make even small triumphs more meaningful.

Wizenberg relates the confusion and anguish of her roller-coaster days facing new, unwanted feelings in heart-wrenching detail. She combs through her entire history, questioning every decision and thought that led her to this point and flounders her way toward healing. Guilt—for rupturing her family; for not fitting into any of the traditional boxes regarding sexual orientation—is also confronted. In the end, Wizenberg is rewarded with the hard-won knowledge that the only certainty in life is change.

The Fixed Stars is an unforgettable memoir about the complexities of sexuality, love, and identity.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (May / June 2020)

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