



A Watch of Nightingales (Michigan Literary Fiction Awards)

Liza Wieland

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A modest, quiet woman, Mara Raynor never dreamed she'd one day find herself in charge of the small private school in Washington, D.C., where for many years she taught music and choir. But after the unexpected death of her husband, the school's headmaster, Mara finds herself thrust into the public eye, burdened not just with the responsibilities of acting headmaster---a role she never wanted---but also with a potentially explosive political and religious controversy that tests parents' and school administrators' spirit of tolerance.

When a Sikh student is caught wearing a ceremonial knife on school grounds, fear spreads among parents and the school board. Coming at the same moment as the disappearance of Mara's teenage daughter, the controversy quickly assumes a far more personal nature. Not just any student, the Sikh boy is both the son of a woman with whom Mara shares a complicated past and---as Mara soon discovers---her own daughter's boyfriend.

As it moves back and forth in time between the school in contemporary Washington and a girls' boarding school in the British countryside in 1977, *A Watch of Nightingales* weaves a rich and textured exploration of fear and remorse, the mysteries of love, and the complicated tensions that ring down the generations from parent to child.

"Conjuring the entwined lives of teachers and students in two schools (and two generations) on either side of the Atlantic, *A Watch of Nightingales* stands alongside *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *Goodbye, Mr Chips* as a testament to the responsibilities, rewards, and risks of teaching. This is a book of luminous insight and quiet but telling wisdom, about youth and maturity and the bridge of loss and remorse that connects them. Liza Wieland's is a mature and deeply moving vision, conveyed in prose that sings as sure and clear as the birds of her title."

---Peter Ho Davies, author of *The Welsh Girl*

Praise for Liza Wieland:

"[T]here is a nobility and boldness to her characters that lends them a heroism missing from much modern fiction and makes these stories wholly absorbing adventures of the heart."

---Ron Hansen, author of *Exiles: A Novel*

"Liza Wieland understands down to the bone how loneliness and love compel her characters to make their impossible choices. Not only does she have a searing intelligence and wisdom, her prose is by turns graceful and astonishing."

---Jane Hamilton, author of *A Map of the World*

Liza Wieland is the author of four previous works of fiction: *The Names of the Lost*; *Discovering America*; *You Can Sleep While I Drive*; and *Bombshell*, as well as a volume of poems, *Near Alcatraz*. Her work has been awarded two Pushcart Prizes, as well as fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Christopher Isherwood Foundation, and the North Carolina Arts Council. She teaches creative writing and literature at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina.

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