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Red Hen Press

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# *Livid*

A NOVEL BY

Cai Emmons

A woman who is suffering from a tragic loss is placed on a jury with her estranged ex-husband.

Sybil White Brown returns from Boston to the small West Coast city where she once lived, hoping to heal after a terrible loss. Summoned to jury duty, she is dismayed to be assigned to the jury of a murder trial alongside her ex-husband with whom she had a rancorous divorce. As the trial progresses, she and her ex tiptoe around each other but eventually become disastrously entangled. Meanwhile, Sybil obsesses about the female defendant, whom she believes is innocent. The situation explodes during jury deliberations when Sybil comes face-to-face with her own unexpressed rage.

## ADVANCE PRAISE

"A page-turning tale of love and loss, guilt and innocence, and those pivotal life moments where everything changes."

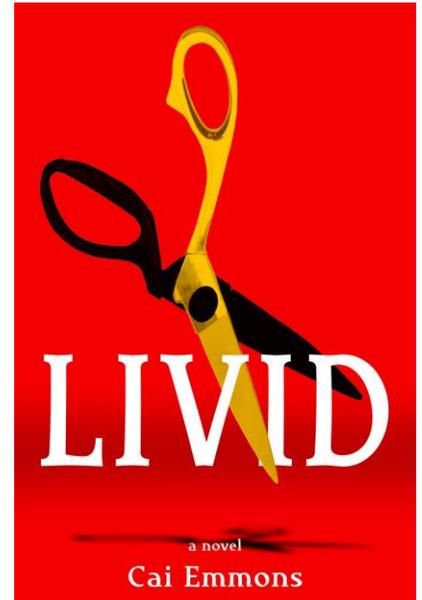
—**Lisa Genova**, author of the best-selling novel *Still Alice*

"Emmons' story pulls in the reader from the very first chapter: a woman, a lawyer, is accused of murdering and mutilating her husband. A second woman sits on her jury, alongside her ex-husband, a man she hasn't had contact with for several years. What follows is a riveting, provocative tale about women, and anger, and how nothing is ever what it truly seems to be. Mostly though, the novel is a classic page-turner that riffs on the nature of guilt and love and trust and truth. It's a book you find yourself thinking about long after reading the final page."

—**Whitney Otto**, best-selling author of *How to Make an American Quilt*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cai Emmons is the author of five books of fiction, as well as the novels *Livid* and *Unleashed*, both forthcoming in 2022. Winner of the Oregon Book Award, the Leapfrog Press Fiction Contest, a Nautilus Award, and finalist for the *Missouri Review* Editor's Prize as well as the *Narrative Magazine* Fiction Prize, Emmons was also short-listed for the Sarton Award and nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her essays and stories have appeared in such publications as *TriQuarterly*, *LitHub*, *Electric Literature*, *The LA Times*, and *Ms. Magazine*. A summa cum laude graduate of Yale College, Emmons holds MFA degrees in film and fiction. She has taught at several colleges and universities, mostly recently in the University of Oregon's Creative Writing Program. She lives in Eugene, Oregon.



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**MORE PRAISE FOR *LIVID***

“Cai Emmons has an exquisite ability to delve into the inner life of her characters. Sybil the narrator has a confiding voice that we trust, even as we recognize that she is both perceptive and blinkered. The murder trial for which she is a juror has stirred an obsessive fascination with the defendant, and the stakes are further raised when Sybil's former husband is also seated on the jury, hurtling her into a vortex of memories and feelings. The vivid and precise writing from one surprising page to the next is a rare treat. *Livid* is as nuanced and graceful a novel as I have read in a long while.”

—**Katharine Weber**, author of *Jane of Hearts* and *Objects in Motion Are Closer Than They Appear*

**FROM *LIVID***

“I told him not to marry her. She was just too different from him. From us. Coming from Alaska, you know. Culturally deprived. Some differences are impossible to bridge. And you couldn’t know her. She was difficult. She hardly spoke, but you could see her mind was always working away on things. Those eyes flitting around. Calculating. A gold digger. Still, you never imagine *this*. How could anyone imagine *this*?”

The waitress brought her Scotch, and she drank, sinking into her thoughts. We let some time pass. I saw us as we would look in a movie: two washed-up women in a tawdry western bar, addicted to alcohol and tunes of nostalgia.

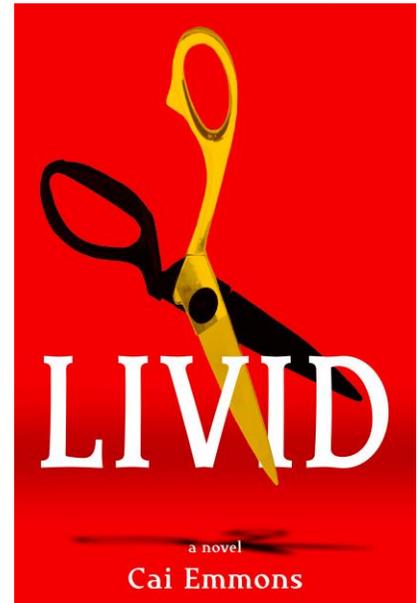
The strangeness of the moment gave me the feeling I had nothing to lose. “Excuse me for saying so, but—wasn’t your son also difficult?”

“What are you doing here? Why did you come here if you’re against me?”

I sipped my wine, and it went to my head immediately. I couldn’t remember the last time I’d eaten a meal, and it had been days since I’d had a solid night’s sleep. I grabbed her irritating phone and silenced it then laid it back down in front of her. She regarded me with an air of resignation. I ran my fingers up and down the stem of my wine glass.

“I’m not against you. Yes, I hope Jessie is acquitted, but that doesn’t mean I’m against you.”

“Don’t be stupid. I know what you think. You think the man is always the asshole. Well, I’m here to tell you that sometimes the woman is the asshole.”



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