

Everything I Never Told You

Celeste Ng

Reviewed by Rachel Johnson, 42

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It's 1977 and Lydia Lee is 16 years old. She is the middle child of James and Marilyn Lee. Her older brother is Nath, and her younger sister is Hannah, but she is the couple's favorite. They do not give Nath much attention, he just wants to go off to college and start a new life. Hannah is quiet and hardly noticed by her parents. One morning Lydia is not at home and she does not show up to school. Once the police are notified that Lydia is missing, they drag the lake near the home and find Lydia's body. The family's life is turned upside down. They all want to know how this could happen.

James and Marilyn are an interracial couple. They married in the 50's even though Marilyn's mother was against it. James is a college professor and Marilyn is a homemaker. She has always wanted to be a doctor, but after starting a family she never finished school. Lydia's parents have lofty expectations of her. Her father expects her to fit in and make lots of friends because he never had that when he was young, her mother expects her to live the dream she had so many years ago. They believe their daughter is living up to all these expectations but after the police investigation, they find out the truth, Lydia has no friends and her grades have dropped.

Amazing! Although it is a story that revolves around a family mourning, there is a strong message of acceptance being presented that will stay with me. Lydia tried so hard to please her parents, to be who they wanted her to be, that she did not know who she was, and it killed her. *Everything I Never Told You* is a story that revolves around the Lee family's emotional state after Lydia's death. Celeste Ng does an amazing job showing how grief can tear a family apart and bring them together. The author grabs your attention from the first page and holds it to the end as she dives into the minds of each character and begins to unveil their secrets. The descriptions are very vivid, outlining each character's most private thoughts. She presents many flashbacks that lead up to Lydia's death and helps the audience understand the family dynamics. The characters are well thought out with their own unique personality. This book has so many different issues like social culture of the 50's and 70's, bi-racial families, infidelity, grief, love, gender roles and suicide. There are some sexual situations, smoking and drinking that parents should be aware of. I recommend this book as a buy for ages 16+.

Recommended Titles

Cryer's Cross, by Lisa McMann

The 57 Bus, by Dashka Slater

Game Changer, by Neal Shusterman

