

The Secret Language of Sisters

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While driving to pick up her sister, Ruth Ann (Roo) McCabe responds to a text message. She realizes she is about to hit a woman walking her dog, so she swerves off the road. Her car dramatically flips onto a frozen marsh, and Roo ends up in the hospital, paralyzed. Everyone thinks she's in a coma, but Roo has locked-in syndrome—she can hear, see, and understand everything going on around her, she can't move. No one knows she's trapped inside her body, pleading for someone to hear her silent screams.

Mathilda (Tilly) is Roo's sister and best friend. Only, Tilly was the one who Roo texted when she got in the accident. Now Tilly must struggle with processing her grief while battling the overwhelming guilt. Before the accident, Tilly felt overshadowed by her perfect sister and tried desperately to live up to Roo's reputation. Roo is brilliant at photography, has excellent grades, is absolutely beautiful, and has a boyfriend named Newton. As Tilly blames herself for the accident, she and Newton bond over their love of Roo. How could she betray Roo by developing feelings for her boyfriend when Roo has already lost so much? But Tilly is the only person who truly gets Roo. Can the girls find a way to both heal?

This book switches between Roo and Tilly's point of view, giving you an in-depth perspective on both of their feelings. It's really realistic and accurately portrays how siblings interact with one another, unlike most books. Roo especially reminded me of myself and my own feelings of protectiveness and closeness with my sister. It was interesting how the author included the death of the girls' father previous to Roo's accident. It creates added suspense to the longing of Roo's condition to improve, while increasing the personal guilt experienced by Tilly. I also think that by having Roo remain in the hospital the whole book was very raw and closer to reality. *The Secret Language of Sisters* is perfect for those with siblings, as it reminds readers how important family is. The novel is a great example of how to treat your sister or brother with respect and kindness, especially when they do something hurtful to you.

The only part of the book that I was upset about was how everyone in town, including her mother, blamed Tilly for texting Roo while she was driving. I believe it is up to the driver to make sure they answer texts or phone calls when they are stopped and not driving. It made me so angry for Tilly! Her sister is paralyzed and all anyone can think to do is make her feel even worse? Blaming Tilly is not going to fix the problem. Isabella, Roo's best friend, especially got on my nerves by playing the blame game. Overall, the book is a realistic cautionary tale about the dangers of texting and driving. The bond between the sisters was well portrayed while showing that both of the girls are individuals and very different. I recommend this book to those aged thirteen and up.

Recommended Titles:

Girl in a Bad Place by Kaitlin Ward

I'll Give You the Sun by Jandy Nelson

Early Departure by Justin A. Reynolds

Far From the Tree by Robin Benway