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Lydia is dead. But they don't know this yet.

So begins this exquisite novel about a Chinese American family living in 1970s small-town Ohio. Lydia is the favorite child of Marilyn and James Lee, and her parents are determined that she will fulfill the dreams they were unable to pursue. But when Lydia's body is found in the local lake, the delicate balancing act that has been keeping the Lee family together is destroyed, tumbling them into chaos.

A profoundly moving story of family, secrets, and longing, *Everything I Never Told You* is both a gripping page-turner and a sensitive family portrait, uncovering the ways in which mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, and husbands and wives struggle, all their lives, to understand one another.

Everything I Never Told You Details

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From Reader Review *Everything I Never Told You* for online ebook

Roxane says

Gorgeously written. Really subtle storytelling but the tension built in a really excruciating, smart way that kept me holding my breath. I also love how Ng approached writing the challenges of identity and difference for both women and people of color, as well as how much the burden of expectations can truly weigh.

Emily May says

“Before that she hadn’t realized how fragile happiness was, how if you were careless, you could knock it over and shatter it.”

This book is a fantastic character portrait. I don't read these kinds of stories too often - family dramas with a focus on the everyday - but when I do I'm usually pleasantly surprised. As much as I'm a lover of amazing story arcs with problems and terrifying consequences, there really is something so fascinating about... people.

A book that focuses on the dynamics between the members of an American family in the 1970s should be slow, and yet I finished this book in a single sitting. Probably because the characters are so rich and well-drawn. Celeste Ng has portrayed the intricate details of these people, of their relationships, of their complex web of contradictory emotions.

Ng opens with the statement "Lydia is dead". Then she delves into the lives of the Lee family as they learn of her disappearance and eventually have to deal with the loss of their beloved daughter and sister. The timeline of the novel skips from past to present, weaving in a history of the characters, gradually revealing the subtle ways this seemingly close-knit family do not know each other at all.

It is subtle, which actually makes it more dramatic, in my opinion. It incorporates sexism, racism and miscegenation, without becoming a story about any of them. This quiet book is so powerful and haunting in the complexity of its simple moments and interactions.

The central story of the book - Lydia's death - is a platform on which the author explores this family, because it is really about the lives of people. The way Marilyn and James fulfill a need for each other that goes beyond love - it's also a sense of belonging and understanding they can't find elsewhere. The layers of love, jealousy and quiet resentment between people. I don't know how an author manages to make the mundane so vivid and so fascinating.

I felt so emotionally pulled into this book that it seems weird to emerge into the real world and find that these characters are not real. I'm left with a lingering sadness and a need to read whatever Celeste Ng writes next.

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Susanne Strong says

5 Stars.

Have you ever felt invisible? Like you were hiding in plain sight? Or like you just didn't measure up? Like you have to fake it till you make it? For the Lee family, this is par for the course, for each member of the family has felt one or more of these things at one time in their lives, if not for their entire lives.

James and Marilyn Lee are a Chinese-American couple with three children, Nath, Lydia and Hannah. Growing up Chinese in the 50's, James, was an outsider - he longed to fit in. To be like everyone else. To be accepted. Once he became a Professor of American History, he gave up. Then he met Marilyn, a white woman and she treated him no differently than anyone else. He finally felt at home. Marilyn always wanted to become a doctor and was studying to become one when she started dating James, got pregnant and they married. At once, the dreams she had for herself disappeared.

James and Marilyn, poured the hopes and dreams they had for themselves into their the first born daughter (and middle child), Lydia. They decided to live vicariously through her. James wanted Lydia to be the popular one, to have friends and go to school dances. Marilyn wanted Lydia to become a doctor so she bought her textbooks about biology and anatomy as birthday gifts and signed her up for extra classes whenever possible. Lydia was a people pleaser. She smiled expectantly. Said yes whenever her mother asked her a question. She pasted a smile on her face and pretended. Day after day after day. And then one day, when Lydia was sixteen, she was found dead.

Nath, Lydia's older brother was a straight-A student. Admitted to the Harvard class of 1981. Though he was the best student, he never measured up to his father's ideals. He was never enough.. and was always an embarrassment. And Lydia? She always came first, she was always the child his parents sought out first, showed attention to, provided affection to and showed interest in. Nath came second. And while he may have understood how his sister felt about his parents and the attention they showed her, he couldn't help but be jealous.

What about Hannah, you ask? Well, she truly was invisible. Her parents hardly ever noticed her. She was an after thought. Lydia barely addressed her and Nath had no time for her, that is until after Lydia, well, until after.

Everything I Never Told You is the heartbreaking examination and devastating portrayal of a Chinese-American family who are strangers to each other, of parents who never take the time to get to know their children and who let their kids slip away from them, one by one.

Celeste Ng's novel haunts you. Her words are achingly beautiful, and they evoke such emotion. This novel made me angry and sad all at once. Sad that James and Marilyn didn't have any idea who their children were, sad that Lydia couldn't be who she wanted to be, sad that Hannah had no one to show her affection, pay attention to her and let her know what it was like to be loved. Angry. Angry at both Marilyn and James for being so short sighted and selfish. Just so angry that these parents never noticed their own children. It is to Ms. Ng's immense talent that she brought forth these emotions from me. I wanted to shout at Marilyn and James. About how apathetic they were, about how they disgusted me, but alas, I did not.

In case you couldn't tell, I loved this book. I imagine that it will bother me for a long time to come. These characters will haunt me. Especially Hannah. In my dreams, she is no longer invisible. In my dreams, she

knows what it feels like to be loved.

A huge thank you to my GR friend Linda who read this a month ago. Your review made me want to read this one. You were right. It was amazing!!

Published on Goodreads and Amazon on 3/12/17.

Nat says

Lydia is dead. But they don't know this yet.

So begins this exquisite novel about a Chinese American family living in 1970s small-town Ohio. Lydia is the favorite child of Marilyn and James Lee, and her parents are determined that she will fulfill the dreams they were unable to pursue. But when Lydia's body is found in the local lake, the delicate balancing act that has been keeping the Lee family together is destroyed, tumbling them into chaos.

I'm pleased with my decision to put a few weeks of distance between me starting this book and having finished Celeste Ng's *Little Fires Everywhere*. The latter left such a lasting and unwavering impression on me, as I mentioned in my raving review, that I was unsure whether I'd get to experience such emotions again in the near future. Thankfully, though, after two weeks of longing, I was more than ready to dive back into the author's wonderful world of stories within stories. And upon having completed the second chapter of **Everything I Never Told You**, where we get a better sense of the ongoing character dynamics, I knew I was in for a treat.

My personal highlights from the book include:

✓ The smaller the details, the more swept up I am in the story.

"But Nath's seen Lydia at school, how in the cafeteria she sits silent while the others chatter; how, when they've finished copying her homework, she quietly slides her notebook back into her bookbag. After school, she walks to the bus alone and settles into the seat beside him in silence. Once, he had stayed on the phone line after Lydia picked up and heard not gossip, but his sister's voice duly rattling off assignments—read Act I of Othello, do the odd-numbered problems in Section 5—then quiet after the hang-up click. The next day, while Lydia was curled on the window seat, phone pressed to her ear, he'd picked up the extension in the kitchen and heard only the low drone of the dial tone. Lydia has never really had friends, but their parents have never known. If their father says, "Lydia, how's Pam doing?" Lydia says, "Oh, she's great, she just made the pep squad," and Nath doesn't contradict her. He's amazed at the stillness in her face, the way she can lie without even a raised eyebrow to give her away."

Sings like Jean-Ralphio SPECIFIC.

✓ The familiar atmosphere and making every family member more well-rounded by going back to their adolescence is something I always enjoy from the author.

"He spent twelve years at Lloyd and never felt at home. At Lloyd, everyone seemed to be descended from a Pilgrim or a senator or a Rockefeller, but when they did family tree projects in class, he pretended to forget

the assignment rather than draw his own complicated diagram. Don't ask any questions, he prayed silently as the teacher marked a small red zero beside his name. He set himself a curriculum of studying American culture—listening to the radio, reading comics, saving his pocket money for double features, learning the rules of the new board games—in case anyone ever said, Hey, didya hear Red Skelton yesterday? or Wanna play Monopoly? though no one ever did.”

The above passage really nails down his feeling out of place in a predominately white school.

“And James? What had he thought of her? He would never tell her this, would never admit it to himself: he had not noticed her at all, that first lecture. He had looked right at her, over and over, as he held forth on Roy Rogers and Gene Autry and John Wayne, but when she came to his office he had not even recognized her. Hers had been just one of the pale, pretty faces, indistinguishable from the next, and though he would never fully realize it, this was the first reason he came to love her: because she had blended in so perfectly, because she had seemed so completely and utterly at home.”

He got together with Marilyn to blend in, while she chose him to stand out, like the author pointed out before: *“Because more than anything, her mother had wanted to stand out; because more than anything, her father had wanted to blend in.”* And now bringing home the point by showing and not just telling... The Shadow of the Wind is shook.

While reading **Everything I Never Told You** I had only one repeating thought that cemented the fact that Celeste Ng's knows how create stories within stories. There is such a somber mood that is perfectly captured throughout the book. The story slowly develops but is never boring. Like trying to piece together the missing pieces of a puzzle.

Inevitably, if I compare this read with Little Fires Everywhere, I'd say it was a bit subsided in its complexity because it didn't feature as many perspectives. Our main focus throughout the book is the Lee family and the aftermath of their stricken tragedy. So I was missing that sprawling look at different characters and point of views that we had in LFE. Where that one was so loud and tumultuous in my head with trying to pierce together ever thread of detail, this one offered something more quiet and introspective.

But that's not to say that **Everything I Never Told You** wasn't a sharp, refreshing look at family-driven dramas. Celeste Ng excels once again at make everything fall into place, from the tiniest detail to the bigger plot twists. And not twists, really, because her books all start with the mystery uncovered in the first sentence: *“Lydia is dead.”* *“...Isabelle, the last of the Richardson children, had finally gone around the bend and burned the house down.”* We instead follow the unfolding of their lives that brought the end results, which grew tremendously important to me.

“How had this all gone so wrong?”

The author also highlights the daring notion for these parents that their child might desire *“something she wanted, not something they wanted for her.”* Too many times did it feel like they weren't seeing their daughter, *“the reluctant center of their universe,”* rather just a younger version of themselves; trying to fix all their past mistakes by having her avoid making her own set of choices. I was stunned watching this very pivotal moment unfold.

“The door creaks open, and Marilyn slowly raises her head, as if Lydia might somehow, impossibly, appear. For a second the impossible happens: a small blurred ghost of little-girl Lydia, dark-haired, big-eyed. Hesitating in the doorway, clinging to the jamb. Please, Marilyn thinks. In this word is all she cannot phrase,

even to herself. Please come back, please let me start over, please stay. Please.”

The desperate "please" haunted me for hours.

All this and more shines so brightly with Ng's rigorous writing style. And I personally cannot wait for all her future works.

*Note: I'm an Amazon Affiliate. If you're interested in buying **Everything I Never Told You**, just click on the image below to go through my link. I'll make a small commission!*

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This review and more can be found on my blog.

Angela M says

I did not enjoy reading this book. The story of this broken family was just so sad and I found that the more I read, the harder it was to read. I felt a constant knot in my stomach .Yet I gave it four stars.

It's the 1970's and James of Chinese descent, born in the U.S has since he was a young boy, just wanted to fit in. The racism he experiences through his life follows to present day and to his mixed race children. He focuses his need and desire to fit in on his middle daughter, Lydia. He wants her to be popular and have friends.

His wife Marilyn wants to stand out. She wanted to become a Doctor at a time when it was a man's world and not easy for women to move into that world. She doesn't succeed and now is transferring her hopes and dreams and expectations on Lydia. Marilyn's lost dream seems like an obsession – she has now made it Lydia's dream, pushing her so hard, reading science books to a little girl instead of bedtime stories. Lydia did what her mother wanted because she didn't want her mother to leave again as she once did in search of her dream.

What was so difficult was seeing James and Marilyn focus their attentions and their aspirations on their middle daughter Lydia while their oldest son Nath and youngest daughter Hannah suffer in silence - to say nothing of the impact of this attention on Lydia. It is through flashbacks that we learn about James' and Marilyn's pasts and how it has affected their children when the story returns to the present day.

While I felt for the parents and what they had gone through, my heart was broken for these children, as they transferred their hopes and dreams on their daughter and hurt all of them. My heart was broken for all of them but especially the youngest child, Hannah who is almost invisible to her family.

But yet, I gave it four stars because Ng has masterfully developed these characters and the story. We learn everything about them - inside and out. We know what they look like and we know how much they hurt, the

pain they bear. I gave it four stars also because while I didn't like the parents very much, I loved the children, and in the end felt that there might be some hope for Nath and Hannah in spite of the tragedy that befalls this family.

Navidad Thelamour says

"How suffocating it is to be loved that much."

Everything I Never Told You centers around the Lee family: James, the Chinese-American professor who lectures on the epitome of what was never attainable for him—true Americanism—Marilyn, the blond wife who'd always dreamed of being a doctor when female doctors were a rare phenomenon only to turn out just what her mother had hoped and what Marilyn had always wished to avoid, and their three children, Nathan, Lydia and Hannah. James and Marilyn focus all of their attention on Lydia who they are determined to mold into everything that they were never able to achieve themselves, creating a crushing pressure for her that comes from both sides. When she dies unexpectedly, the glue that holds them all together is no longer able to hold. As they try to learn what happened to her—and why—they come to realize that she was not the girl they thought she was. The reader is allowed to learn this before the family does, which creates a beautiful inside glimpse of a family crumbling.

Everything I Never Told You is about just that: the subtle nuances and emotions that go unsaid, the familial tension behind closed doors that goes unnoticed, unexplored, and the way that our lineage and upbringing shape our lives, for better or for worse. Gripping in its portrayal of dreams deferred and hopes crushed, of coming of age in the 60s and 70s, of the subtle (and not-so-subtle) cruelties of the world and of the ignorance of those who would rather mock than understand, *Everything* was an exploration of the overwhelming pressure of a family's love and expectations—both for themselves and for their children. Despite the fact that this one had a few moments of lethargy at the start, it all came together beautifully, and the last half or so of the novel I finished in one sitting. This novel, all told, was a bold and shattering glimpse into reality for all of the characters involved. It was the historical and ancestral short-fallings, misgivings and dreams unrealized that brought this book to a head in the most lovely way. It was chilling in its honest and straight-forward depiction of challenges with fitting in, with being oneself, all wrapped into beautiful little metaphors that were easy to hold...and easy to crush: a Betty Crocker cookbook, a white doctor's coat, cowboys, a silver locket.

"Different" was the connective tissue here. The characters' differences from those of the outside world and in the incongruousness of their perception of themselves versus what others saw were so well developed that the feeling of discomfort (both in their lives and in their minds) was palpable, creating a need to continue turning the pages. Ng portrayed their longing here brilliantly—longing to be someone else, to be free.

"Sometimes you almost forgot: that you didn't look like everyone else...you saw it in the little boys on the playground, stretching their eyes to slits with their fingers—Chinese—Japanese—look at these—and in the older boys who muttered ching chong ching chong ching as they passed you on the street, just loud enough for you to hear...and tried to forget about it. And you did, until it happened again."

Ng was not forceful with her hand, but allowed those things unsaid, undone, unnoticed, to tell the story in its way of delicate nuances. The snatching off of a locket here, the touching of ones finger to tongue there. It was those subtleties that the reader had to catch, or they'd miss something integral. Characterized by lovely

narrative prose, Ng's MFA background stood out and was on full display in a way that showed spirit and depth. Mellifluous, introspective and refined, it dug into the very soul of what it means, what it must feel like, to be different. 5 stars. *****

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karen says

ENTER THE GIVEAWAY!!

this book is absolutely perfect.

it's easily one of the best contemporary family dramas i have ever read, and i have read more than a few.

ng's prose is outstanding, and her characters are vibrant, completely three-dimensional, and the way their stories knot up in each other is superb.

it opens with the death of sixteen-year-old lydia, the beloved middle child of marilyn and james lee. marilyn and james are a mixed-race chinese/caucasian couple living in a small town in ohio in the seventies, where such relationships were still extremely uncommon. in the united states, anti-miscegenation laws were only declared to be unconstitutional by the supreme court in 1967, which is a little mind-boggling, but there it is.

race plays a role in the conflict(s) of the novel, but it's just one component in what is really a story of family dynamics.

How had it begun? Like everything: with mothers and fathers. Because of Lydia's mother and father, because of her mother's and father's mothers and fathers...Because more than anything, her mother had wanted to stand out; because more than anything, her father had wanted to blend in. Because those things had been impossible.

marilyn grew up in virginia, the daughter of a home economics teacher who *always wore gloves outside the house* and whose greatest dream for her daughter was to *meet a lot of wonderful Harvard men*. marilyn has more ambitious plans - with her scholarship to radcliffe, her ultimate goal is med school, and she excels in her physics and chemistry classes, enduring the condescension of her all-male classmates (which is confusing to me, because in 1955, radcliffe was still an all-female school, as far as i know), in order to achieve her real objective - to end up nothing like her mother.

Late at night, bent over her textbooks while her roommate wound curlers into her hair and patted cold cream onto her cheeks and went to bed, Marilyn sipped double-strength tea and kept awake by picturing herself in a white doctor's coat, laying a cool hand against a feverish forehead, touching a stethoscope to a patient's chest. It was the furthest thing she could imagine from her mother's life, where sewing a neat hem was a laudable accomplishment and removing beet stains from a blouse was cause for celebration. Instead she would blunt pain and stanch bleeding and set bones. She would save lives. Yet in the end it happened just as her mother predicted: she met a man.

the man is james lee - fourth-year graduate student and marilyn's teacher for "The Cowboy in American Culture," who is, in the terminology of the day, *an Oriental*, specifically *a Chinaman*. after the very first class, marilyn goes to his office and kisses him. and from then on, they're together. which abruptness seems a little out of left-field, but it makes sense somehow. for her part, she thinks *He understands. What it's like to be different.* and he does. and his attraction to her comes from the completely opposite direction: *because she had blended in so perfectly, because she had seemed so completely and utterly at home.*

KILLS. ME.

james' father had emigrated to america under a false name, after a ban had been placed on chinese immigrants. james was born in america but he always felt alien. at best a novelty, at worst the object of ridicule and casual racism. self-taught and trying to shed the stain of the immigrant; the shame of being the son of a janitor and a lunch lady, eating his mother's dumplings in a sea of privileged white faces, james had always been aiming for assimilation. lonely, friendless, unathletic, james has felt "other" his whole life. until america - in the shape of a blonde-haired, blue-eyed woman, accepts him - marries him despite the protestations of her mother.

this is probably too much detail tl;dr and all, but i am just so gobsmacked with how perfectly ng has set this family up to be doomed. this is thomas hardy-level cause and effect intricacy. and i'm not going to give too much away, this is just backstory - the real meat hasn't even been served up yet.

quickly, quickly, because there's still so much more to celebrate: they have three children, the first of which, nathan, effectively ends marilyn's career dreams. lydia is the middle child, dead on page one; the daughter each parent has hung their own missed opportunities upon - her father wants her to make friends, to be popular as he never was, and her mother wants her to have the academic success and career she gave up for her family. and then there's hannah. the youngest; an afterthought, frequently overlooked even when she is in the same room, but the keenest observer, and the only one able to see the big picture.

so the story is manifold - finding out how lydia ended up at the bottom of a lake - and you will - this isn't one of those ambiguous endings, but although she is the center of the narrative, by the time all is revealed it almost doesn't matter. this book is more about character. where the idea of "family" is a character all its own. it's about the pressures put on children by parents, children wanting to please, parents making assumptions, siblings caught between jealousy and sympathy, infidelity and sacrifice, the poison of the american dream, racial identity, and what happens to a family after their lynchpin is removed.

everything about this book kicked my ass. each and every character had a story that was profound and devastating and i cried like a kitten on fire. which is very rare and always a delicious surprise.

the more i think about this book, the more i love it. so many tiny moments that splintered into my feeling bits. such quiet, understated scenes that are haunting me still.

i cannot believe this is her first book.
and i cannot wait for the next one.

too many feels, etc etc

Colette Fehr says

Hmmmm.... Quintessential MFA graduate writing, which is to say lyrical creative prose that captures emotion in the details, following the MFA formula of "show; don't tell," to provide character exposition. The author shows us the interiority of her characters brilliantly- and then goes on to slam us over the head with explicit "telling" as if we're complete morons who can't figure it out for ourselves. Furthermore the themes that guide the relationships in this family are so over the top and one note (I.e mother's vicarious ambition for daughter is an attempt to resurrect and fulfill her own thwarted aspirations) that the every exchange revolves around whatever singular force guides the particular relationship in a way that is exhaustingly heavy- handed. This interfered with enjoying the book and getting invested in the characters for me. Despite the beautiful writing I didn't believe for a minute that one of these characters was real and I didn't buy any if the relationships. They all felt like symbols or allegories almost the way characters in fairy take would. I craved a little more complexity and depth from the relationships in the family and although I couldn't put the book down, found myself feeling a little "meh" when I was finished.

Regan says

I received this book for review from Penguin

Boy oh boy was I impressed by this book. Before I started reading it I was expecting something Lovely Bones esc. No. So much better.

This story is kicks off with the reader finding out about the death of the "favorite child" Lydia, with this I assumed it would just be an emotional book about finding the cause of death ect ect. Nope. But also yes. This book's scope is beyond what I was first expecting and branches off in so many directions as we follow the families' lives after and before the death of Lydia. This book is truly about "Everything I never Told You" the book focuses on each member of the family, their hopes, fears, dreams ect and how at so many important parts of their lives they never voiced any of it, and showed the consequences of doing so.

Additionally this book is set in the 1970's and deals with both race Identity and gender Identity.

This book was truly a treat and I will be doing a full review soon on my channel

Julie says

Everything I Knew Told Your by Celeste Ng is a 2015 Penguin Books publication.

As I began this book, my mind was a clean slate, with absolutely no preconceived ideas about it, so I was really surprised by it, and stunned by my emotional response to it. Once I started it, I literally did not move from the couch until I had turned the last page.

One of the main topics addressed here is the interracial marriage between a white woman, Marilyn, and an American Chinese man, James, who marry in the late 1950's, at a time when such an occurrence was very rare.

While this is a huge theme in the story and it is referred to often, I also picked up on the unhappiness I am sure many women like Marilyn felt in this time frame. Marilyn was smart, very smart, and wanted to be a doctor, (not a nurse), in a time when this too was very rare. Determined to have her cake and eat it too, she married the man she was in love with and started a family, but her career never materialized as planned. Marilyn eventually accepts her dream is never going to come to fruition and so it is her oldest daughter, Lydia, who must make up for this failing.

So, when Lydia disappears her parents are absolutely destroyed, and long buried feelings of resentment bubble to the surface and expose the cracks in this seemingly well adjusted and happy family.

It is hard to pinpoint who is the saddest character in the story. Lydia of course was a character that really struck a cord with me on a personal level. I know that pressure to live up to expectations you have no way of achieving, no matter how hard you work at it. Sometimes, we are not born with the talents our parents possess and when you are supposed to live out their dream, failure to measure up is simply unacceptable.

Nath's character is hard to relate to at times. He's a guy, so his emotions are often masked in anger and bitterness. He desperately wants his father to support him and show pride in his son's rather impressive achievements, an area in which James failed utterly. Therefore, when Nath sees himself gaining an edge on Lydia, he turns away from her in hopes of finally getting a nod of approval from his father.

Then there is Hannah, the youngest child, who observes the family from afar and sees things more clearly than anyone else, but is often baffled by the actions of her family members. My heart ached for this poor neglected child who settled for crumbs thrown her way, but was just flat out lost in the shuffle, and perhaps Marilyn resented Hannah too, since Hannah's entry into the world effectively killed Marilyn's last ditch effort to finish school and achieve her career goals.

Then there is Marilyn whose character is both over the top and sad, a woman unfulfilled, terrified of ending up like her mother, while she is trapped in the same role of being a housewife and mom, she becomes so obsessed in her determination to save Lydia from this fate, she creates a toxic family atmosphere that is unhealthy for everyone and it ultimately backfires on her in a most awful, gut wrenching way.

James is just too passive. He never stands up to Marilyn, they never talk about things, he doesn't stand up for his children and I really couldn't understand what Marilyn saw in him. I was not impressed with him in any way until the very end when he appears to have a life altering epiphany that saves them all from total ruin.

So, the race issue is of course running in the background because it can't be ignored. The children born into an interracial marriage were thought to have special difficulty finding where they fit in. It was hard to make friends, to be involved in social activities and a plethora of other issues. James was of course particularly sensitive to race issues, and Nath also took racism to heart, but it is not a topic discussed within the family and Marilyn never makes an issue of it until her daughter disappears.

However, I am not convinced in any way that being in an interracial family was at the root of Lydia's issues, but it was easier to place the blame on race than to take a long hard look at themselves. Outsiders, not knowing the general make up within the family were quick to hypothesize, but ultimately I felt it was more Marilyn's tunnel vision that led Lydia to a pinnacle of supreme agony, she simply couldn't cope with.

This story is sad, emotional, but utterly absorbing, and beautifully written. My heart went out to all the characters in the book, some of whom I felt more keenly for than others, but I still wanted them to come out

in tact, even if they will never be completely whole again. The Lee's will soldier on, believing in second chances, and learning from their past mistakes. This is a very thought provoking and compelling read, a cautionary tale, ending with a message of hope and the promise of better days to come. 5 stars

Raeleen Lemay says

WHAT A GREAT BOOK. I'm mad at myself for waiting so long to pick this up, and I sort of wish I'd read my physical copy rather than listening to the audiobook, but whatever. It was still really great! This is the type of book I feel would be more enjoyable on the page than on audio, but with that being said the audiobook was well done.

This is the story of a dysfunctional family dealing with the death of 16-year-old Lydia, the middle child. You get to see snapshots of each family member's life, in the past and in the present, and it was written so magnificently that each transition was perfectly seamless (although in the audiobook I sometimes got confused because I couldn't see the page breaks lol). I can see myself reading this book again in the future, because my perception of the characters changed so much from page to page, so it's the type of book that will change and shed new light with every re-read.

Cheri says

4.5 Stars

"Lydia is dead. But they don't know this yet. 1977, May 3, six thirty in the morning, no one knows anything but this innocuous fact: Lydia is late for breakfast."

This is how the book begins. They hit like a punch, knocking the wind out of you, these first sentences. And yet, while this part of the story runs throughout these pages, each person viewing the circumstances that led to her death in their own, inimitable way, this is the story of the years before, of all that led up to this day for each of the family members, and those whose lives they touch. Each relationship completely different from another, separate, unique.

To her mother, Marilyn - a disappointment to her own mother significant enough for a wedge to form on the day of her wedding, never to speak to one another again - Lydia is her hope that all of her hopes and dreams that didn't come true will come true in Lydia. She has raised her to want to be what she, herself wanted to become - a doctor, but never did.

"Because more than anything, her mother had wanted to stand out; because more than anything, her father had wanted her to blend in. Because those things had been impossible."

To her father, James, the son of Chinese immigrants, born in the US, he wanted nothing more than for Lydia - for all his children - to blend in, to not be noticed for their differences, to be accepted. He is a professor of American History at Middlebury College in Ohio.

Nath, the oldest, had always been there for Lydia, in his own way. He resented, but became used to the way

his accomplishments were overlooked as his parents shined all their light on Lydia. He loved her, looked out for her, but he was looking forward to college, to getting away from home with no hope of escaping second place, at best.

”Dreaming of his future, he no longer heard all the things she did not say.”

Lydia, the middle child, the one her family had pinned their hopes and dreams on, not that she’d wanted that; not that she hadn’t bent to the point of breaking over the pressure of that expectation. Too afraid to shatter her mother’s hopes and dreams for her, by admitting they were not her own hopes and dreams. And so, in her own way, Lydia, who she really is, how she really feels, shrinks to invisibility, lost to all that her mother wants and needs for her to be.

Hannah was the youngest, an afterthought, perhaps, or really more a delayed surprise, her mother had become so accustomed to life as it was that sometimes she forgot all about Hannah.

” And what about Hannah? They set up her nursery in the bedroom is the attic, where things that were not wanted were kept, and even when she got older, now and then each of them would forget, fleetingly, that she existed – as when Marilyn, setting four plates for dinner one night, did not realize her omission until Hannah reached the table. Hannah, as if she understood her place in the cosmos, grew from quiet infant to watchful child: a child fond of nooks and corner, who curled up in closets, behind sofas, under dangling tablecloths, staying out of sight as well as out of mind, to ensure the terrain of the family did not change.”

In some ways, reading this felt almost like reading the personal diaries of this family, these people. Their innermost, unfiltered thoughts, their disappointments, their hurt, their anger, their passion, their hopes and dreams are all opened to view. Ng manages to show you their thoughts and feelings so slowly and delicately revealing each layer as though she’s performing a sacred ritual. Your heart goes out to them, even when they are not all particularly likeable. But the children... my heart is still breaking.

Recently, I read Ng’s ‘*Little Fires Everywhere*’ which I really enjoyed, but even though the stories are heartbreaking in ‘*Little Fires Everywhere*’ and ‘*Everything I Never Told You*’ there’s a quality that I found in this book that I missed in her newest, a lovely ethereal quality of this story, in the sharing of the thoughts of this family. It reminded me a bit of reading Eliza Henry-Jones ‘*In the Quiet*’ which I also loved.

Recommended!

Many thanks, once again, to the Public Library system for the loan of this book!

Whitney Atkinson says

4.5 Stars

This book offers one of the coolest family/character explorations I've ever read. I love books that dive into characters' morally grey area, and this was especially interesting because each character's perspective on their family member's death was so distinct. I felt for every character on the page and there was never a dull

moment. This was really masterfully made and well fleshed out, and it was as gorgeous as it was tragic. The audiobook for this was great and the writing style was definitely memorable. If you're looking to get into adult fiction and aren't sure where to start, this one definitely makes you think but is still short enough and interesting enough to keep you flying through the pages.

Jesse (JesseTheReader) says

finished this in one sitting! if you need me, i'll be over here bathing in my tears.

Justin says

The first chapter was great. I was expecting an exciting mystery/thriller. I was anxious to find out how Lydia disappeared.

Then, the rest of the book happened.

I hated all of the characters. I hated the perfectly executed sentences. I hated the story. I hated the ending.

Oh, and I *really hated how half of the book was written in italics*. I would usually insert something sarcastic or witty here about the use of italics in the book, but I just can't do it. But, man, I hated her overuse of slanting letters to the right and writing choppy sentence fragments to attempt to make me care more about this stupid book.

First, it was *The Martian*

Then, it was *The Girl on the Train*

And now it's this horrible, lifeless book with wooden characters that no one cares about and hundreds of wasted pages on the past of the stupid characters that no one cares about.

I'm done with popular, overhyped books like this. There are too many great books out there, and I refuse to waste my time on something like this again.

Hey, was I clear on how much I hated this book?

Just wanted to be sure.
