



Summary of Everything I Never Told You: A Novel: Celeste Ng | Summary & Analysis

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SUMMARY/ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Everything I Never Told You is a very different kind of mystery. It opens like countless other thrillers – a young girl vanishes from her home and is later found at the bottom of a lake, drowned. The town is shocked and fascinated by the tragedy, and the police launch an investigation. But as the mystery unfolds, we find that the clues to Lydia Lee's untimely demise are embedded deep within the history of the girl's family.

At first, the Lees seem like the perfect all-American clan, with sixteen-year-old Lydia as the flawless, favored child. However as the Lees mourn and desperately search for answers, the ugly truth of the pursuit of perfection is revealed. The Lees are mixed-race Chinese and white family and in 1977 small town Ohio, they stick out like a sore thumb. Lydia's parents, James and Marilyn each carry deep regrets – James always longed to fit in and have friends, and Marilyn dreamt of being among the ranks of the first woman doctors in America, before pregnancy and marriage dashed her ambitions. So instead they turned their hopes and expectations on Lydia, forcing her to resort to lies and deception to keep them happy. Meanwhile, their other children, Nath and Hannah, watched from the fringes, knowing they would never have their parents' full attention. But Nath knew that Lydia was buckling under the pressure – and something had to give. This novel bounces back and forth in time, detailing the investigation in Lydia's death alongside the Lee's backstory. Each of the remaining family members is keeping secrets from the others, and each holds a piece of the puzzle. Don't expect a stereotypical thriller with this book. Instead, Celeste Ng beautifully reveals the struggle of new kind of family desperately seeking acceptance in America, as well as the darker side of parental pride and ambition. This is a highly entertaining and thought-provoking read that will linger in your mind long after you put it down.

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