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The Year She Left Us: A Novel (P.S. (Paperback))



Synopsis

From the winner of the 2009 Iowa Short Fiction Prizeâ€”comes the extraordinary, unexpected debut tale of three generations of Chinese-American women in a San Francisco family who must confront their past and carve out a future. The Kong women are in crisis. A disastrous trip to visit her "home" orphanage in China has plunged eighteen-year-old Ari into a self-destructive spiral. Her adoptive mother, Charlie, a lawyer with a great heart, is desperate to keep her daughter safe. Meanwhile, Charlie must endure the prickly scrutiny of her beautiful, Bryn Mawr educated mother, Granâ€”who, as the daughter of a cultured Chinese doctor, came to America to survive Mao's Revolutionâ€”and her sister, Les, a brilliant judge with a penchant to rule over everyone's lives. As they cope with Ari's journey of discovery and its aftermath, the Kong women will come face to face with the truths of their livesâ€”four powerful intertwining stories of accomplishment, tenacity, secrets, loneliness, and love. Beautifully illuminating the bonds of family and blood, *The Year She Left Us* explores the promise and pain of adoption, the price of assimilation and achievement, the debt we owe to others, and what we owe ourselves.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Year She Left Us is a beautifully written debut book about the lives of three generations of Chinese American women who are bonded together by love and loss. The book is told through alternating chapters by Charlie and her daughter Ari, with a few carefully interwoven chapters from Les and Gran. A single woman, Charlie Kong longs for a baby and against the advice of her older sister and mother travels to an orphanage in China to adopt. Charlie names her baby Ariadne (Ari for short) and delights in her motherhood. Ari is given all the love she could ever need by the Kong family of women. Charlie is a kind soul who lives her life doing for others. She is a public defender, and after the abrupt ending of a serious relationship devotes herself to her daughter and family. Les, her confident older sister is a judge hoping for a federal magistrate position. Their mother Gran, is well educated, outspoken and family oriented. Like Ari, she was born in China and has not come to terms with heartbreak in her own past. "The future holds promise while the past is full of ghosts."Charlie is convinced that Ari will have it easier as an adopted child, as she can decide later if she wants to inform others that she was adopted. Charlie makes a lifelong friend in Robyn, who she meets when traveling to the orphanage in Kunming, her daughter named Asia Jade (A.J) also becomes Ari's best friend. A.J. is adopted into a white Jewish family and never looks back at her parentage . Ari, as Gran lets the reader know "looked back, a fatal error. She never should have visited the orphanage full of bad associations"Ari's feelings of of abandonment culminates in her total withdrawal from her family after she and A.J.

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