

**Title:** *Everything I Never Told You*

**Author:** Celeste Ng

**Edition:** 2014

### **Plot Overview**

The story about the mysterious death of Lydia Lee moves back and forth in time. The story opens by announcing that sixteen-year-old Lydia—her parents' favorite child—is dead, though her family doesn't know it yet. The Lees live in Middlewood, Ohio. Marilyn, Lydia's white mother, aspires to be a doctor. Her Chinese American father, James, is an American history professor. Her studious older brother Nathan is obsessed with space and headed to Harvard. And her sister Hannah, in fifth grade, is quietly observant and often overlooked. When Marilyn finds that Lydia missing, she is sure Lydia's been kidnapped. Nathan thinks Jack, a carefree loner who sleeps with a lot of girls, knows something about Lydia's disappearance. The next day someone sees a rowboat in the middle of the town lake. The police drag the lake and find Lydia's body.

The story shifts to the 1950's, giving background about the wishes and concerns of Marilyn and James, how they meet, married, and ended up in Middlewood. The story returns to the present with Lydia's funeral and the Lees looking for answers. An autopsy report determines her cause of death as drowning with no signs of foul play. James finds solace in an affair with his teaching assistant, Louisa. The story shifts back to when Lydia was little, and Marilyn hoped to resume her studies. Closing up her mother's house after she died, Marilyn is even more determined not to end up like her prim 1950's housewife mother. Marilyn decides to leave her family, without explanation, to finish her studies in Toledo. That summer, Nathan has a humiliating experience at the pool that he blames on Jack. This reminds James of being teased as a kid. But instead of comforting Nathan, he's hard on him.

After Lydia's death, the Lees grieve separately. Officer Fiske indicates that Lydia may have committed suicide because she had no friends and wasn't doing well in school. Nathan continues to believe that Jack is connected to Lydia's death. The story then moves back to the summer Marilyn disappeared. Lost without his wife, James barely looks after Nathan and Lydia. Nathan sees a space launch that launches his passion for space. Meanwhile, Lydia promises herself she will do whatever her mother wants if her only mother will return. In Toledo, Marilyn's aspirations are once again disrupted by pregnancy. James comes to take her home, where she decides to pour all her frustrated ambition into Lydia. Resenting the attention Lydia gets, Nathan pushes Lydia, who can't swim, into the lake. When he rescues her, Lydia becomes especially dependent on Nathan. Ten years later, Lydia struggles under her parents' expectations—her mother's desire for her to become a doctor and her father's emphasis on having friends and fitting in. Lydia is succeeding at neither. She worries about Nathan leaving her to go to college. In physics, which Lydia is failing, she begins a friendship with Jack. The two drive around smoking cigarettes and talking.

The story shifts to after Lydia's death. The police close the investigation, ruling Lydia's death a suicide. Misunderstandings pull the family apart and create further rifts between Marilyn and James. James continues to find comfort with Louisa. Meanwhile, Nathan holds onto his suspicion of Jack. But Hannah is certain that Jack didn't do anything bad because she's realized that Jack is in love with Nathan. When James doesn't come home, Marilyn goes in search of him at school and at Louisa's. The story returns to

before Lydia's death, Lydia spends time with Jack while Nathan monitors their activities from a distance. Nathan catches Lydia ripping up one of his letters from Harvard. Lydia is happy to receive a heart locket from James, but the picture inside only reminds her that James wants her to fit in socially. On her sixteenth birthday, James and Louisa take Lydia to get her driver's permit. Lydia fails her test because she hasn't studied and is angry, thinking her father is sleeping with Louisa. At home, Lydia hides the locket under her bed but pretends to be happy during her birthday celebration.

The story returns to after Lydia's death. James comes home and confesses to his affair. Misunderstanding and hurt makes Marilyn tell James to leave. Marilyn then angrily rips apart Lydia's room and finds her old cookbook, which makes Marilyn realize that it is her not science that Lydia loved. Hannah is finally allowed to comfort her mother and receive the affection she's craved. Meanwhile, Nathan takes off in the car and gets drunk. Driving toward Toledo, James realizes how much he has misunderstood.

The story shifts back to right before Lydia's death. Nathan goes to visit Harvard and Lydia understands he's becoming a new person who will leave the family behind. To change herself, Lydia decides to lose her virginity to Jack. But Jack gently turns her down and admits to being in love with Nathan. Feeling foolish, Lydia threatens to tell Jack's secret. Jack then stings Lydia by telling her that she doesn't know what she wants. At home, Lydia tries to figure out when everything went wrong. In the middle of the night, she decides it was when Nathan pulled her out of the water. Wanting to start over, this time doing what she wants and not being afraid, Lydia rows out to the middle of the lake. There she tries to swim back to shore, even though she doesn't know how to swim. The story concludes after Lydia's death. James returns home, snuggles Hannah, and reconciles with Marilyn. Nathan sleeps after Officer Fiske delivers him home safely. The next morning at the lake, Nathan, trailed by Hannah, releases his anger and guilt about Lydia on Jack, who lets Nathan punch him. Trying to stop Nathan, Hannah pushes him into the water. Nathan wants to let himself drown but can't. The story ends with positive references to the future and with Jack pulling Nathan from the water while Nathan keeps his eyes on Hannah's face.

**Title:** *I Am Malala*

**Author:** Malala Yousafzai

**Edition:** 2013

### **Plot Overview**

Malala is a Pakistani, Muslim girl who becomes a well-known activist for the education of all children and is shot by the Taliban, an Islamic militant group. Malala describes her life in Mingora in the lush Swat Valley in northwest Pakistan. Her family is part of the Yousafzai tribe of the Pashtun people, who are guided by their *Pashtunwali* code that stresses hospitality and honor. Malala introduces her family: her educated, forward-thinking father Ziauddin, who founded and runs the Khushal School, where Malala is enrolled; her beautiful and pious mother, Toor Pekai; and her younger brothers Khushal and

Atal, with whom she sometimes fights. Malala is celebrated by her father, despite being a girl, and is named after a courageous folklore heroine.

Malala gives lot of background about her parents; their love-match marriage and the mountainous area of Shangla, where they are from; and the Yousafzai tribe. She tells about her grandfather and father, including her father's efforts to overcome a stutter, live up to his cleric scholar father's expectations, and pursue an education. She highlights her mother's lack of education and her father's passionate support of education along with his difficult efforts to start a school, where Malala spends a lot of time. Malala also details the birth of Pakistan and its Islamization under General Zia. Later, she relates General Musharraf's takeover of Pakistan's government.

Malala describes her family's visit to Shangla, a remote, impoverished area where women's lives are difficult and very restricted. She then introduces her friends—her best friend and schoolmate Moniba, her academic rival Malka-e-Noor, and her neighbor Safina. She recounts valuable lessons about stealing, the negative results of seeking revenge, and the importance of being a gracious loser. Doing good in the world is important to Malala. Her family sets a strong example by sharing whatever they can. Her father become a community leader and activist, and he encourages Malala to speak up for the importance of education.

After 9/11 and with the American War on Terror in Afghanistan, *mullahs*, religious leaders, become increasingly powerful in Swat. Malala's father has a confrontation with a local *mullah* over girls attending his school and interpretations of the Quran. Malala provides context by detailing the religious tensions in India, Pakistan, and among Muslims. With the devastating Pakistani earthquake in October 2005, Islamic militants gain popularity because they provide rapid and practical relief that the government does not. The Taliban emerge in Swat under Maulana Fazlullah, referred to as Radio Mullah for his influential radio broadcasts promoting *sharia*, strict Islamic law and designating what is *haram*, forbidden. Women are told to stay home in *purdah* and only go out accompanied by a male relative and wearing a *burqa*. Patrolling the streets, the Taliban flog and murder transgressors and destroy what they consider anti-Islamic. There is a violent confrontation between the army and the militants at the Red Mosque in Islamabad. The return of Pakistan's first female prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, offers hope until she is murdered two months later. Terror increases in Swat with the Taliban's harsh punishments and bombing campaign that blow up hundreds of schools.

Malala continues to go to school, despite Fazlullah's order that girls stay home. In interviews, Ziauddin and Malala speak out about the repressive, violent situation in Swat. Under the pseudonym, Gul Makai, Malala writes about her experience under the Taliban for a BBC Urdu website, and a *New York Times* documentary follows her on the day her school is shut down. This brings Malala and the situation in Swat international attention. Fazlullah decides girls under eleven can return to school, and Malala continues her schooling even though she is eleven. Malala's family live in fear as the army and the Taliban continue to battle and the situation in Swat gets worse. Finally, the residents of Mingora are told to evacuate. Malala's family become internally displaced persons along with millions of other Pashtuns. The army beats back the Taliban, and Malala's family is able to return to Mingora, which has been devastated by war. They are glad their home and the Khushal School are still intact. But the hardship continues. Extreme monsoons create more devastation in Pakistan, and the re-merging Taliban once again provide more aid than the government.

Tensions between Pakistan and America heighten after the American's secret raid on Pakistan to kill Osama bin Laden. Meanwhile, Malala gets honored nationally and internationally for her activism. In telling about a trip to Karachi, Malala explains the tumultuous, violent history of her country and the fighting between Pashtuns and the *mohajirs* and the Sunnis and Shias of Islam. Wanting to address her country's many problems and the need to educate its large illiterate population, Malala decides she will become a politician. Because she is so vocal, the Taliban target her as a Westernizing threat to Islam. Ziauddin gets accused of offending God by letting his schoolgirls go on a fieldtrip. He is also questioned by Pakistan's intelligence service. He knows he and Malala are at risk, but they decide to stay in Swat.

In October 2012 on her way home from a school exam, Malala's school bus is stopped by the Taliban who shoot Malala and two schoolmates. Malala fights for her life, needing numerous operations, including to give her back her smile, and a lot of rehabilitation. Because the army hospitals in Pakistan have insufficient levels of care for her survival, she is flown to a hospital in Birmingham, England. Her family joins her there after a bureaucratic delay. Malala receives an outpouring of support from the outraged international community, but reactions within Pakistan are divided between pride and negative conspiracy theories. The Pakistan government sets Malala's family up for their new life in England. The family misses their life in Pakistan. And Malala hopes to return someday. Meanwhile, Malala is happy to resume school and is more determined than ever to continue her work helping people.