Everything Was Good-bye

by Gurjinder Basran



About the Book

Set in lower mainland British Columbia, **Everything Was Good-bye** is a moving modern-day story about a young Indo-Canadian woman named Meena who?s struggling to find her place in the world. Caught between the traditional values of her family and her desire to have the same freedom as other Canadian women, Meena is faced with difficult choices? and her decisions will lead to tragic consequences for everyone involved.

We first meet Meena as a seventeen-year-old girl in her last year of high school. Her family immigrated to Canada when she was still a baby, and soon after that her father was killed in a workplace accident, leaving her mother with the task of raising six daughters on her own. It is an onerous task not only because she must support the family, but she must also ensure that her daughters are all placed in acceptable arranged marriages. As the youngest daughter, Meena is expected to obey her mother and follow in her sisters? footsteps: ?We dressed modestly, hiding our flesh, living somewhere deep inside our skins?chaste and quiet.? But as a headstrong and rebellious teenager, Meena refuses to accept the role that has been assigned to her.

In school, Meena is an outcast?she doesn?t fit in with any of the social groups?until she meets Liam, who seems to be the only one who accepts her for who she is. Her mother forbids her from seeing him for fear of ugly rumors spreading in the close-knit Punjabi community, but Meena recklessly disobeys. Upon graduation, Liam announces that he wants to run away to Toronto and asks Meena to come with him. Torn between her desire to be with him and her obligations to her family, she hesitates, and he disappears.

A few years down the road Meena is a young career woman still living at home with her mother. Facing increased pressure to accept an arranged marriage, she finally agrees to marry Sunny, a successful lawyer and the son of a prominent Indo-Canadian family. Neither Meena nor Sunny are truly happy, but both agree to the marriage in order to please their families. But when Liam reappears in Meena?s life she must confront her true feelings. She is faced with the difficult choice of leading a life that fulfills her family?s expectations or a life that fulfills her own.

Debut novelist Gurjinder Basran has created a world filled with fascinatingly complex characters in a powerful, uniquely Canadian story. Beautifully written and searingly honest, **Everything Was Good-bye** is a novel that explores the meaning of love, the pain of heartbreak, and the journey toward self-acceptance.

Discussion Guide

1. The death of Meena?s father left the family in a tough situation?a single mother struggling to raise six daughters in a new country. Discuss how her father?s death shaped Meena?s relationship with her mother.

2. Meena is the youngest of six daughters and in many ways has experienced more freedom than her other sisters. Do you think they feel any jealousy or resentment toward her?

3. Liam confides in Meena that he went to see his mother after she had abandoned the family. Do you think that was a mistake on his part?

4. Meena?s sisters Serena and Harj both experience what could be seen as a betrayal of trust by their mother. Serena is sent home to her husband who assaulted her, and Harj?s insistence that she didn?t willingly get into a car full of men fell on deaf ears. How do you explain Serena?s and Harj?s different reactions to this betrayal?

5. Marriage plays a large role in the lives of many of the characters. What does the author reveal about each of the characters through these relationships?

6. Before they?re married, Sunny admits to Meena that he still cares for his ex-girlfriend, Jasmine, and that his parents wanted to keep him away from her. In what ways do you think his feelings for Jasmine affected his feelings for Meena? Do you think he would have ever loved Meena?

7. When Meena learns that she is carrying Liam?s child, she tries to hide the truth from Sunny. Could she have handled the situation better? What would you do in her position?

8. When Meena unexpectedly runs into Harj at the store, they agree to sit down for coffee. During this reunion, there are a number of awkward moments with many things left unsaid. Do you think Harj will ever reconcile with her mother? Is the bond between sisters unbreakable?

9. Do you believe that Meena will one day marry Kal? Discuss what reasons Meena might have to change her mind? What could be her reasons to continue their current relationship?

Author Bio

Gurjinder Basran?s debut novel, EVERYTHING WAS GOOD-BYE, was the winner of the BC Book Prize, Ethel Wilson Fiction Award in 2011 and named as a Chatelaine Magazine Book Club pick in 2012. Gurjinder was named by the CBC as one of "Ten Canadian women writers you need to read." Gurjinder studied Creative Writing at Simon Fraser University. She lives in Delta, BC with her family.

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