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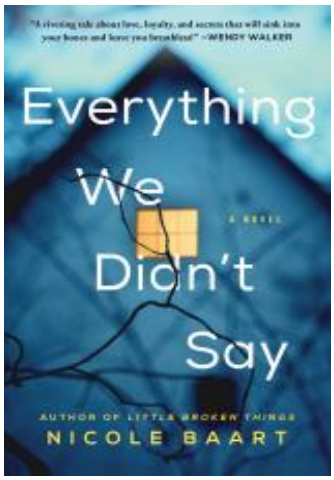
Everything We Didn't Say

by Nicole Baart



About the Book

From the author of LITTLE BROKEN THINGS, a ?race-to-the-finish family drama? (*People*) following a mother who must confront the dark summer that changed her life forever in order to reclaim the daughter she left behind.

Juniper Baker had just graduated from high school and was deep in the throes of a summer romance when Cal and Beth Murphy, a childless couple who lived on a neighboring farm, were brutally murdered. When her younger brother became the prime suspect, June?s world collapsed and everything she loved that summer fell away. She left, promising never to return to tiny Jericho, Iowa.

Until now. Officially, she?s back in town to help an ill friend manage the local library. But really, she?s returned to repair her relationship with her teenage daughter, who?s been raised by Juniper?s mother and stepfather since birth --- and to solve the infamous Murphy murders once and for all. She knows the key to both lies in the darkest secret of that long-ago summer night, one that?s haunted her for nearly 15 years.

As history begins to repeat itself and a dogged local true crime podcaster starts delving into the murders, the race to the truth puts past and present on a dangerous collision course. Juniper lands back in an all-too-familiar place with the answers to everything finally in her sights, but this time it?s her daughter?s life that hangs in the balance. Will revealing what really happened mean a fresh start? Or will the truth destroy everything Juniper loves for a second time?

Baart once again brilliantly weaves mystery into family drama in this expertly crafted novel for fans of Lisa Jewell and Megan Miranda.

Discussion Guide

1. At the beginning of EVERYTHING WE DIDN'T SAY, Juniper pulls into Jericho and we see the small town through her eyes. What can you infer about her childhood and her complicated connection to her hometown in these first few pages?

2. Juniper?s relationship with her mother is fraught to say the least. Rebecca makes her feel exiled from Jericho and unworthy of a meaningful relationship with her own daughter. But on page 324, Reb refutes that belief by explaining why she pushed Juniper away: ?Don?t you see? I saved you. I wasn?t going to let you repeat my mistakes.? What do you think? Was Juniper banished? Or did Reb save her by ensuring that she went to college, finished her degree and led a successful, independent life?

3. Fatherhood also plays an important role in EVERYTHING WE DIDN'T SAY. Juniper never knew her biological father, and her stepfather was often stiff and aloof. How do you think this affects her as both a teen and a grown woman?

4. They say that opposites attract, and that?s certainly true in EVERYTHING WE DIDN'T SAY. Lawrence and Rebecca and Sullivan and June are a couple of obvious mismatches. What makes their relationships work? Or do you think they were doomed from the start? Are there other unexpected pairings?

5. When they were teenagers, June knew that her best friend, Ashley, had a significant crush on Sullivan. Still, June allows herself to fall in love with him. Do you think her actions are unforgivable or understandable?

6. When talking with Cora, teenage June wonders: ?What are Jericho?s ideals?? Cora says: ?Community. Family. Faith.? June counters: ?Tradition. Uniformity. Compliance.? Who do you agree with? Why?

7. Although the specifics of the situation surrounding the Tate and Murphy feud are fictional, there truly are more than 750 impaired waterways in Iowa alone (meaning they fail to meet state requirements for supporting aquatic insects, fishing, swimming or boating). And the United States is crisscrossed with bodies of water that do not meet pollution control standards. Do you think enough is being done to keep our environment clean? Why or why not? How should we balance agriculture and industry with environmental concerns?

8. Willa isn?t sure what to do with her mother when Juniper returns, and Juniper doesn?t know how to act like a real mom. What do you think Juniper could have/should have done differently? Do you think her absence is understandable and forgivable? Explain.

9. In chapter 11, adult Juniper finds herself in the Murphys' old coop during a snowstorm with Sullivan. They embrace, and he kisses her. How does this interaction make you feel? Can you forgive them for their indiscretion?

10. Talk about Juniper?s relationship with Jonathan. How did it change over the years? Do you think Jonathan should have come clean about the Murphys and the Tates to Juniper when they were teenagers? How do you think that might have affected things?

11. People sometimes do inexplicable things for love, and the characters in EVERYTHING WE DIDN'T SAY are no different. Talk about this in relation to Law, Reb, Jonathan, Juniper,and Sullivan. Do you think their actions were justified? Why or why not?

12. In the first chapter, we read: ?Maybe it was all her [Juniper?s] fault that a killer in Jericho walked free.? At the end of the book, we learn that Juniper, Jonathan and Sullivan all kept secrets about that night. Do you think their deceit was justified? Do you think it would have changed anything if they came clean right away?

13. Juniper wants Willa to have a relationship with her father, and she?s determined to make it work. Do you think that there?s hope for Willa and Sullivan? How do you think Ashley will react? How would you like to see their story end?

14. How much do you believe Reb knew about the night that Cal and Beth were killed? Do you think she suspected (and covered up for) her husband? Give evidence to support your beliefs.

15. EVERYTHING WE DIDN'T SAY is told in alternating viewpoints (June as a teenager and Juniper as an adult). In some ways, these are opposite and opposing perspectives: summer and winter; beginning and end; innocent and jaded; unknowing and worldly wise. Discuss the differences in Juniper, past and present. How does she change? How does she stay the same? Do you like June or Juniper better? Why?

Author Bio

Nicole Baart is the author of several novels, including WHERE HE LEFT ME and EVERYTHING WE DIDN'T SAY. The cofounder of a nonprofit and mother of five, she lives in Iowa with her family.

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