



Laurel Everywhere

Erin Moynihan

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With its themes of family, loss, sexuality, and self-discovery, Erin Moynihan's *Laurel Everywhere* is a touching and quirky coming-of-age story.

Laurel was named after the laurel bush, a nondescript plant that is found everywhere outside of Seattle, where she lives. Her siblings were also named for flora: Tansy after a pretty yellow flower that Laurel refuses to believe is a weed, and Rowan after a tree native to the Scottish Highlands. As the middle child, Laurel always felt boring compared to her outgoing siblings, like an outsider in her own family because of her idiosyncrasies.

But Laurel's mom and siblings were killed in a car accident a month ago, and Laurel has begun to feel guilty about her sibling envy, her anger, and all she said and did when they were alive. As she and her dad work to figure out life without the rest of their family, Laurel is thankful for her two best friends, Hanna and Lyssa, whom she needs now more than ever. But since Hanna kissed Laurel, things have been weird between them.

Written from Laurel's perspective, the story is sympathetic to first loves and heartbreaking loss. Laurel's confused feelings are rendered in sensitive prose, and the book is convincing in its portrayals of the pain of loss. Laurel's voice is loud and clear as she describes hating the man who was driving the truck that hit her family.

The book also centers self-awareness and growth. Laurel longs to be more comfortable in her own skin and to find coping mechanisms to deal with her loss. Though she uses some humor and distractions, she also talks to Ghost Mom to soothe herself and grapple with questions of how to move forward without her.

Laurel Everywhere is a tender, honest novel of self-discovery in which family and friends love and support a teenager through her challenging times.

KARLA STRAND (November / December 2020)

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