



The Lost Girls

Heather Young

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In the summer of 1935, six-year-old Emily Evans vanishes from her family's vacation home on a remote Minnesota lake. Her disappearance destroys her mother, who spends the rest of her life at the lake house, hoping in vain that her favorite daughter will walk out of the woods. Emily's two older sisters stay, too, each keeping her own private, decades-long vigil for the lost child.

Sixty years later Lucy, the quiet and watchful middle sister, lives in the lake house alone. Before she dies, she writes the story of that devastating summer in a notebook that she leaves, along with the house, to the only person to whom it might matter: her grandniece, Justine.

For Justine, the lake house offers a chance to escape her manipulative boyfriend and give her daughters the stable home she never had. But it's not the sanctuary she hoped for. The long Minnesota winter has begun. The house is cold and dilapidated, the frozen lake is silent and forbidding, and her only neighbor is a strange old man who seems to know more than he's telling about the summer of 1935.

Soon Justine's troubled oldest daughter becomes obsessed with Emily's disappearance, her mother arrives with designs on her inheritance, and the man she left behind launches a dangerous plan to get her back. In a house steeped in the sorrows of the women who came before her, Justine must overcome their tragic legacy if she hopes to save herself and her children.

The Lost Girls Details

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From Reader Review The Lost Girls for online ebook

Pamela says

"The things we do for love are the hardest to regret."

Oh my heavenly stars, if ever there was a book perfectly primed for lively book club discussions that encompass serious ethical and moral quandaries - discussions that could easily tarry long into the night - **The Lost Girls** is it!

And to think, this is Young's first novel. WHAT???? SUPER WOW!!!

"The air stirred around her face in a cold caress, and she gave a quick shudder. There must be a draft somewhere. In fact, she could hear it: a whispering all through the house, as if the house were breathing."

And did I mention, ethically haunting??? Could it happen as written? Would it happen as written, love so loyal yet disloyal, sanely rationalized yet demented, pure yet guilty as sin? I don't know. But I DO KNOW I couldn't put this book down.

There's not much I can divulge without giving away the farm, other than to say this novel is about family, facades, sisters, economical and racial divides, misguided loyalties, survival ethics, false religion, domestic dysfunction, and secrets. BIG UGLY secrets. And a word of warning, there are brief bouts of expletives. And some content is disturbing; written decorously, but still, it resurrected painful memories for me. Sometimes though, it's good to revisit the dark recesses of our history to be reminded of just how far we've come. And more importantly, to celebrate the power of TRUE mercy, love, and forgiveness.

FIVE ***** Exceptionally Well-Written Coming-of-Age Noir, Encompassing Serious Ethical/Moral Quandaries, and Well suited for Lively Book Club Discussions ***** STARS

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

I'm always on the lookout for a good historical mystery and The Lost Girls about a little girl that went missing in 1935 sounded just perfect for me. And, it was a very good book where the answer to the mystery was not given straight away. Instead, we get to follow Lucy's memories from the notebook where she has written down what really happened to her little sister 60 years previous. In the present time has Lucy's grandniece Justine moved into Lucy's house after her death and there she tries to build a new life for her and her daughters. But, the past has a tendency to catch up. And, not just her own, but her family's past.

The book's story is interesting and deeply tragic and it kept me guessing right up until the end what really happened to Emily. The Lost Girls is a good title for the book because, in a way, the girls in the family are really lost as Emily's disappearance started a vicious cycle. Not that Lucy, Justine and the rest of the characters get lost in real life like Emily did. More like there is something in them that are lost. Something they are yearning for. They all have personal demons to deal with, even Justine eldest daughter who is not that old yet.

It's a very good book, well-written and thoughtful and sometimes deeply moving. And, so sad.

I want to thank William Morrow for providing me with a free copy through Edelweiss for an honest review!

Angie says

A great book for a debut author. Impressive writing, and I really was invested in the story, and wanted to know what was happening. BUT it's a very depressing book. In my opinion. No feel good here. That dimmed my overall enjoyment. Others might not feel that way though!

It's a dual timeline set in present day with a mom and her 2 daughters trying to get by (and get away), and the past setting where a family with 3 daughters ends up with one missing at the end of summer vacation. Family secrets abound here! The mysteries twine around themselves and intersect nicely. Historical fiction fans who don't mind a little sadness will enjoy it for sure :)

Diane S ? says

3.5 It was the mention of a lake house that drew me to this book. My cousins and I spent many summers at our lake house, grew up there, such memorable times. Of course, none of us children ever disappeared, so this element of mystery was another draw. A slower paced book, a family, with three daughters and it is the youngest, Emily, just six who disappears and is never found.

Two time periods, because it is the eldest daughter's own daughter, Justine who inherits the house. A house she and her own two daughters will escape to getaway from a controlling boyfriend. There the middle daughter's journals will be found and the mystery behind the disappearance will be revealed. Family secrets, a young special friend and a few other details are all found in this journal.

I liked this, it was mysterious, atmospheric, and I grew to really like Lucy. Once again, the secrets of the past will haunt the future and it was interesting to see how it all unravels.

ARC from publisher.

Kathleen says

5 ?? WOW! This book was amazing! It was well written in an easy to read style that brought the characters to life and drew me into the world of Lucy as well as that of her great niece, Justine, and kept me reading into the wee hours of the morning. I wanted to know what Lucy was writing for Justine in her journal. I knew that it contained the big secret - but what exactly was the big secret?

I liked most of the characters in the story, and felt really happy when Emily found her much needed distraction, but I couldn't identify with the adults, especially Lilith, Lucy and Emily's parents and Justine's mother, Maurie. I felt sad for Matthew, even though he would not want me to feel that way and would probably question it.

This was a definite page turner! I wanted to find out what happened, but I didn't want this wonderful story to

end. This 5 star book (for me) is Heather Young's first novel! I highly recommend you read *The Lost Girls*. 5 ??.

Stephanie Anze says

When the Evans family leave Williamsburg for their annual trip to their lake house for the summer, all seems normal. The three Evans sisters, Lilith, Lucy and Emily look forward to this trip for it gives them a relaxed summer of swimming in the lake and exploring the woods. But this year is not as carefree. Six-year-old Emily goes missing. The family is not the same afterwards. Some years later Justine receives notice that she has inherited the lake house from her grandaunt Lucy. Needing a new start, she takes her two daughters and moves into the house. But its not the idyllic place she remembers and it forces her to confront her problems straight on.

So this is yet another book that lived on my TBR list for a bit and I am glad to finally have read it. The Evans family appears to be a typical family heading out to spend their summer in their lake house. Its a tradition that many of their friends have as well and they all look forward to spending a few carefree months away from the city. Expecting an idyllic summer, the Evans receive quite the opposite when the youngest of their daughters goes missing and has not been seen since. Justine has only ever been in the lake house once but recalls a warm atmosphere. Experiencing her own troubles, receiving the house is great news. But this house harbors secrets that lead to that mysterious disappearance of Emily. Though its hard to tell at first glance, this book has a darker tone. The tensions that gradually build up foreshadow a grim secret hidden for years behind a facade. Part family saga and coming-of-age story, this was a well paced narrative that was well crafted. Not a happy read per se but one that held my interest throughout. I enjoyed the way in which Young intertwined the story of all the Evans women and characterization was on point. A worthy read overall.

Annie ~ The Misstery says

Read the review here >> IBoth the plot and the structure reminded me of Kate Morton's books, which is always a good sign (I absolutely love Kate Morton). Change the English setting for Minnesota and voilà: you have the perfect book filled with mystery, family secrets, disappearances and a big, beautiful house in the middle of nowhere.

It's 1935 and Lucy, 11, and her family can't wait to spend the summer in their vacation home in Minnesota. Lucy adores her big sister Lilith, but she seems to be drifting apart from her and thinking only about boys and makeup. She doesn't want to spend her afternoons with her little sister Emily, because she's way too young for her. But then, at the end of the summer, Emily suddenly disappears and her two older sisters decide to spend the rest of their lives at that isolated home, with her mother. 60 years later, Lucy think it's finally time to write about what really happened that summer...

I want to say that this is not one of those books where the "crime" takes place at the beginning and you spend the rest of the book trying to figure out how it happened. This is a dual novel about an unforgettable summer in 1935 and, at the same time, a story about a woman and her two daughters trying to start over.

And yes, undoubtedly, the "past" narration was more interesting than the present one (because who can resist a book about an ideal summer gone wrong?), but I still wanted to know what happened to Justine, Melanie

and Angela (and Maurie), the family who inherits the big house in the lake.

Jennifer S. Brown says

This is one of those books where you think, "I need to sleep, but I'm going to read just one more chapter," and the next thing you know, the book is done but you're still awake because you can't stop thinking about it.

This story alternates between Justine's story (taking place in 1999) and her great-aunt Lucy's story (taking place in 1935). In 1935, Lucy's younger sister Emily disappears. Lucy's family is practically frozen in time, as Lucy's mother waits for Emily to return. In 1999, Justine has just inherited her great-aunt's lake house, where she goes for a fresh start with her daughters.

The way the stories intertwine and slowly draw out the details is beautiful. The language is melodic and Young has an amazing way of weaving a sentence. As the secrets of the book unwound, I got chills. The story is downright haunting and I was never sure where it was going until the very end. The secondary characters are quite intriguing and well-drawn as you try to figure out who is worthy of Justine's trust. The ending is perfect. I really loved this book.

?Karen says

When I won an ARC of this from LibraryThing, and then it never materialized, a very disappointed me contacted the author Heather Young directly. She offered her apologies and a promise to get a copy in the mail to me pronto. Lo and behold, what arrived at my door was not an ARC but a beautiful hard cover finished copy, personally inscribed to me and signed by the author, with a nice note, saying " ... and I hope The Lost Girls is worth the wait." I hoped so too -- I was already very impressed by her style.

I needn't have worried because the book is fantastic. I am gobsmacked and feel like gushing a little here. That this is a debut is unbelievable. I loved this story. Justine and her two daughters flee San Diego and an overly possessive boyfriend to live in the house Justine inherited from her great-aunt Lucy. The house is a summer home on a lake in No. MN and it's November - December, so... not a good move exactly. Justine's chapters alternate with a journal that Lucy wrote for Justine to tell her, if no one else, the truth about the unsolved disappearance of Lucy's sister Emily many years prior.

So another missing girl story, but one where even those present and accounted for seem lost for what to do, how to love each other, and how to live. We get to know this family through 5 generations of women. Their stories, combined with the mystery of Emily's disappearance, made it hard to put down. The culmination of it all was a stunner and well worth setting aside my life and responsibilities for the past weekend. My 2 thumbs are pointing skyward at 5 big shiny stars. A big thank you to Heather Young for my copy.

Tina says

A really well written debut by Heather Young. It's a slower paced book (perhaps just like a summer by the lake) that goes back and forth from present time to the Summer of 1935.

The story is about a family: a father, a mother and their three girls who vacation every summer at their Lake house in Minnesota. The summer of 1935 ends in tragedy as the youngest girl vanishes.

In the present day the Lake House is left to Justine, who inherits it from her Great-Aunt Lucy upon her death. Justine barely knew Lucy. But Lucy has left a journal about the Evans family and the tragedy of the summer of 1935. Through these journals, Justine will begin to unravel the mystery surrounding little Emily's disappearance. Justine's life too is in tatters. With these journals she will not only learn about the family she hardly knew but will discover how to restore happiness and direction in her own life.

Beth McCraw says

I loved this book so much! I can't believe it's a debut by the author, I will definitely read anything she writes! Definitely and highly recommended!

Elizabeth of Silver's Reviews says

Inheriting a house she had only lived in for one summer of her childhood seemed to be a way out of her current situation? for Justine and her daughters.

Arriving at the house that Aunt Lucy left her was not what Justine had expected. The house was run down and no where close to anything but some odd neighbors.

Aunt Lucy??'s? sister ?who ?had disappeared at the age of six and was never found was the main focus of the book? along with the emotional lives of each character.

THE LOST GIRLS was a family saga that had chapters about the lives of the three sisters, Lilith, Lucy, Emily, and Justine both past and present. The Evans women lived unhappy lives which carried on from one generation to the next.

The father of Lilith, Lucy, and Emily was a bit disturbing. He was odd and strict. The girls were different but interesting. Justine and her daughters followed suit.

I enjoyed THE LOST GIRLS despite the gloomy feeling that seemed to overshadow everyone. Ms. Young has a marvelous, descriptive writing style that helped you understand and connect with each character and each situation.? Her writing just pulled you into the story.

If you enjoy a bit of family drama as well as secrets and mysteries, you will enjoy THE LOST GIRLS. 4/5

This book was given to me free of charge and without compensation in return for an honest review.?

Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says

This review can also be found at Carole's Random Life.

I really enjoyed this book quite a bit. I am not always a fan of books that feature dual timelines but this one worked really well for me. I ended up liking both of the timelines equally and thought that Lucy and Justine both had an interesting story to tell. This story was really focused on the characters with the plot building slowly. I found myself really invested in this group of characters by the close of the book.

This book focuses on Justine and Lucy. When Lucy died, she left everything to her grandniece, Justine. Justine has two little girls and lives with her boyfriend in California but feels something missing in her life. When Justine inherits Lucy's lake house in Minnesota, she takes her girls and moves there in order to get a fresh start. The transition isn't as easy as Justine expects it to be.

Lucy has her own story to tell and decides to write everything down before her death. When Lucy was a child, her younger sister, Emily, disappeared from the lake house and has never been found. Lucy's story tells everything that happened during the summer leading up to Emily's disappearance. Emily's disappearance was heartbreaking and shaped the lives of Lucy and her family.

This book really showed how one event can impact a family for generations. Emily's sisters never really moved on with thier life after she disappeared. I liked watching Justine learn to take care of herself and really decide on what she wanted for herself and her girls. It takes a lot for her to learn to stand up for herself but I have a lot of hope for her by the end of the book.

I would recommend this book to others. It was a book that gave me hope and broke my heart all at the same time. The slower pace was a nice change and I thought it really gave me a chance to connect with the characters. I enjoyed Heather Young's debut novel and look forward to reading more from this author in the future.

I won a copy of this book from William Morrow via LibraryThing Early Reviewers.

Initial Thoughts

I liked this one quite a bit. I really enjoyed both of the timelines equally and thought that both Lucy and Justine had an interesting story to tell. The story ended up being very different than I had thought that it would be and I liked the slower pace of the story.

A B says

The protagonists of this book are the kind of people Judge Judy does this to:

Judge Judy is usually spot on.

This is not about the mystery of a little girl's disappearance.

This is about FOUR generations of white trash women. The first is a cowardly woman who sacrifices one child to save another from abuse. The next three generations of them deliberately pop out fatherless children, who in turn grow up to be useless pieces of shit and make more completely doomed babies. A fifth generation of Evans women seem fit to repeat the pattern.

The story alternates between 1st person narration of Lucy Evans' diary and third person narration of her great-niece, Justine Evans. Lucy's story is a convoluted tale about the truth of her sweet little sister's disappearance. Justine's story is just another fuckup.

Justine's baby daddy runs out on her and their two daughters. Within six weeks, she's shacking up with a new boyfriend. On the same day that her boyfriend acts a little too possessive, she learns she's inherited property in northern Minnesota. She literally loads the car and leaves sunny San Diego for the freezing Minnesota winter *right on the spot*. One brief mention informs that reader that it is 1999, thus nearly everyone is offline so Justine thinks her boyfriend can't find her. She leaves behind her job and breaks her daughters' hearts by making them quit school, ruining any remaining stability those poor kids have.

So, the house turns out to be ramshackle and freezing. Justine is such a worthless piece of crap that she won't even get the oven fixed to cook a decent meal for her children (the broken oven is a plot device). The only company she has is a lonely elderly man named Ben and his mentally disabled brother, Abe. Ben & Abe were friends with her great-aunt Lucy and grandmother Lilith, both who are dead at the start of the story.

What follows is a longwinded tale of summers at a lake around the Great Depression. The lake was a relief from the sadness of the world, but something was amiss with the Evans family. While Lucy and Lilith could not have controlled what their parents did, their cruelty was without merit, particularly in the way they bullied their little sister, Emily.

Spoilers follow:

I thought Mrs. Evans was abusing Emily until it's made explicitly clear in the book that Lilith was sexually abused by her dad. However, Emily was such an unhappy child that I wonder if her mom was also abusing her.

Lilith may have been a confused young teenager, but that doesn't explain why she continued to rape and become impregnated by Abe. I thought it was horrible of her to be buried with the engagement ring of a man she didn't love simply for spite. She'd already lied about her daughter's parentage, yet took offense that a Gold Star mother didn't believe said lies?

Maury turned out to be a grifter and a drifter. Perhaps she resented her mother and aunt, but it did not justify the way she thoughtlessly brought Justine into the world and raised her. The book would have been better if she'd died in the fire.

I kept hoping that little Emily was mercifully kidnapped by a loving family to get her away from her horrible family. Instead, her own sisters killed her. I didn't feel sorry for Mrs. Evans because after what she did, she deserved to suffer with her grief, but the way Lucy let Lilith's crime, however unintentional, go unpunished was wrong. Lucy acknowledges this but is too cowardly to do anything other than to leave a note to Justine.

Book of Secrets says

Impressive debut! What really happened to six-year-old Emily that summer in 1935? Quiet suspense, dark family secrets, and a remote Minnesota lake house combine for a haunting, atmospheric tale. {Borrowed

from the library.}
