

The Last Thing He Told Me by Laura Dave

Martin County Library System Book Club Kit:

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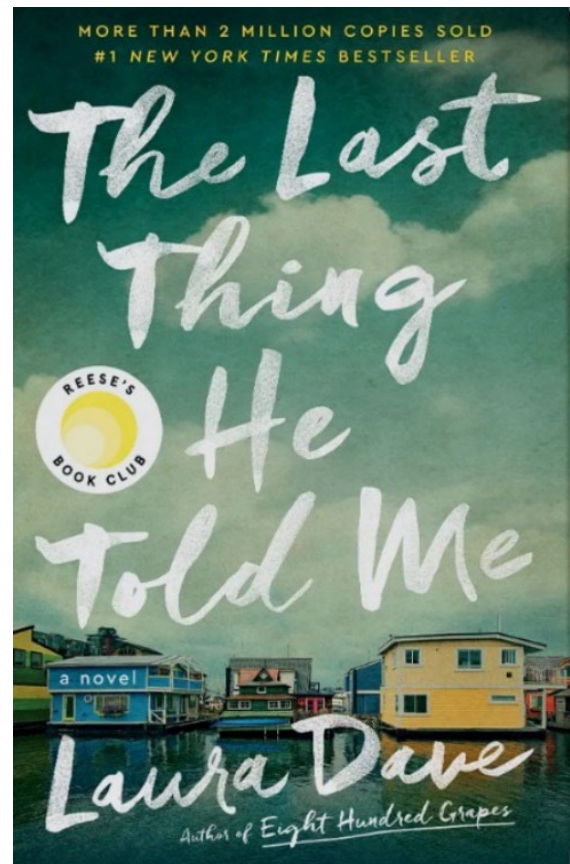
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Book summary

Before Owen Michaels disappears, he manages to smuggle a note to his beloved wife of one year: Protect her. Despite her confusion and fear, Hannah Hall knows exactly to whom the note refers: Owen's sixteen-year-old daughter, Bailey. Bailey, who lost her mother tragically as a child. Bailey, who wants absolutely nothing to do with her new stepmother.

As Hannah's increasingly desperate calls to Owen go unanswered; as the FBI arrests Owen's boss; as a US Marshal and FBI agents arrive at her Sausalito home unannounced, Hannah quickly realizes her husband isn't who he said he was. And that Bailey just may hold the key to figuring out Owen's true identity—and why he really disappeared.



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Hannah and Bailey set out to discover the truth, together. But as they start putting together the pieces of Owen's past, they soon realize they are also building a new future. One neither Hannah nor Bailey could have anticipated.

Source: Author's website (lauradave.com)

Meet the author

Laura Dave is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of several critically acclaimed novels including *The Last Thing He Told Me*, *Eight Hundred Grapes* and *The First Husband*. Her work has been published in thirty-two countries, and five of her novels, including *The Last Thing he Told Me*, have been optioned for film and television. She resides in Santa Monica, California.



Source: Goodreads.com



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Discussion questions

1. Consider the quotes that open each part of the book. What connects them? What relation do they have to each part of the story?
2. Consider the choice of narrator. How does the narrator shape our understanding of the contours of this story? How might the book be different if the narration switched off between Bailey and Hannah? Or even added in chapters from Owen?
3. In the prologue of the book, Hannah recalls that on their second date, Owen grilled her about the “could-have-been boys” of her past, “the men I’d left behind, the men who had left me.” In what ways is Owen one of those “could-have-been boys”?
4. Discuss the message that Owen sends to Hannah before he disappears. What does Owen mean by “Protect her”? How does Hannah interpret Owen’s request? How would a different message have changed Owen’s intent and Hannah’s actions?
5. We learn early on that Hannah’s mother left her when she was young. How is this similar to and different from the absence of Bailey’s mother? How does it compare to the way Owen leaves Hannah and Bailey?
6. When Hannah picks Bailey up from school the day Owen disappears, Bailey comes out with “a needy look on her face that I don’t recognize.” (p. 22) This is the first of the small but pivotal moments that transform Hannah and Bailey’s relationship. What are some of the other small moments in which they rely on each other?
7. Owen’s note to Bailey says, “You know what matters about me.” (p. 23) What do you think this means? What would you hope that your loved ones would say are the things that matter about you?
8. Early on, Hannah compares Owen’s departure to that of her father leaving her mother: “Doesn’t that make me the same as her? Both of us putting our faith in someone else above everything else --- calling it love. What good is love, if this is where it leads you?” (p. 45) At another point, she realizes that



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her belief in Owen will show her to be either a “steadfast partner or a complete fool.” (p. 143) Discuss the relationship between faith and love, trust and foolishness.

9. In Austin, Hannah tells Bailey that she’s trying to protect her, to which Bailey responds, “But you can’t. That’s the thing. No one can protect me from this. So how about you agree to be the person who tells me the truth?” (p. 112) What’s the relationship between the truth and protecting those we love? Can we do both, or are they mutually exclusive?
10. Hannah realizes that Owen isn’t running for just any reason, but that “he’s running from something he’s terrified of.” (p. 150) Did you have any theories about what Owen was running from, and did the real answer surprise you? What are some things that might make you drop everything and run the same way Owen did?
11. Grady tries to impress upon Hannah the reality of transitioning into WITSEC, outlining what she and Bailey would need to leave behind to start their new lives. Imagine what that might be like for you and your family. What names would you choose? What jobs, hobbies or identifying activities would you have to give up? How would you make a life for yourself?
12. How would you feel if you were asked to take care of someone else’s child? In what circumstances might you say yes, or no? Owen placed immense trust in Hannah’s making a specific decision. Was it, ultimately, warranted? Was it fair to even ask her?

Source: Reading group guides (www.readinggroupguides.com)



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Recipe suggestion

Quick & Easy Texas Stuffed Jalapeno Poppers Recipe

- Jalapeno peppers – each about least 3-4 inches long
- Cheddar cheese – shredded
- Cream cheese – softened
- Green onion – just the green parts, chopped

Cut 1/3 of each pepper off lengthwise and scoop out the seeds with a spoon. After cutting the jalapeno peppers length-wise, run a small spoon along the inside to remove the membranes and seeds until the inside of the pepper is smooth. Place jalapeno peppers on a baking sheet. If the peppers do not sit flat on the baking sheet, slice a thin piece off the bottom of the pepper so it will not roll around. Mash the cream cheese, shredded cheese, and onion together and stuff the peppers with the mixture. Roast at 425°F for 15 to 18 minutes. The appetizers are ready when the jalapeno peppers are tender and the cheese is golden and bubbly on top.



Source: The Feathered Nest (thefeatherednester.com/stuffed-jalapeno-poppers)

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