

★ Forget I Told You This

Hilary Zaid

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Set in a dystopian near-future, Hilary Zaid's conspiracy novel *Forget I Told You This* sets itself apart with erudite flair and heartfelt human drama.

Amy specializes in writing letters by hand in an age where the act of writing is a distant memory for most. But when a client asks her to write a cryptic plea for help and then disappears, Amy's search for the truth leads her to potential allies and foes (not to mention lovers). In time, her quest brings her to the mega-popular social media company Q, which may be harvesting user data for nefarious means.

Befitting Amy's obsession with words, this literary mystery interrogates the meaning of memory and asks how much should be remembered or forgotten. It is packed with fascinating references to real-life manuscripts, including a legendary Bible translation, the Codex Argenteus, that falls into Amy's hands. And it combines an eye for detail with speculative science fiction elements, resulting in a quirky vision of the future: the latest in surveillance and consumerism butts heads with traditional forms of communication, including ham radios and pigeons with secret messages tied to their legs.

While the fate of the world hangs in the balance, the true impact of the novel comes through its delicate characterizations. Haunted by memories of her ex-wife, forced to care for an invalid father and a developmentally disabled brother, and afflicted by face blindness (an inconvenient condition to have when differentiating friends from foes), Amy may be vulnerable and uncertain, but her compassion for others and desire to do right make her a sympathetic hero.

Confronting timely questions such as how to preserve free will in a data-driven society while also telling a humane tale about rising above tragedy and disappointment, *Forget I Told You This* is a memorable novel—an adventure through words and emotions.

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