

Legacy of Lies

Lexa M. Mack

iUniverse (Mar 1, 2022)

Softcover \$13.99 (228pp)

978-1-66323-585-5

Genetic testing and family secrets upend a blogger's life in the twisting mystery novel Legacy of Lies.

In Lexa M. Mack's whodunit novel *Legacy of Lies*, a murder mystery pairs with a shrouded family history.

In San Francisco, twenty-five-year-old Kestrel has a day job as a waitress, but she's also a freelance writer who blogs about high society. Then Kestrel takes a DNA test and learns that she had a sister, Grace, whose murder she's tasked with solving. She's also eager to understand her family's deceptions.

Moving day by day, this urgent mystery is relayed from Kestrel's perspective as she pieces together information about her sister, her sister's murder, and their family's past. She learns just enough information at any given point to ensure engagement, with intrigue sustained about where that knowledge will lead. The book is intelligent about setting up its final reveal without telegraphing the nature of the surprise too much.

Kestrel is a perspicacious and distinctive heroine, seen swigging Two Buck Chuck even in rarefied circles whose other attendees quaff expensive wine. And secondary characters are captured with telling details: a millionaire scion whose family fortunes date back to the Gold Rush confesses that she worked as a waitress, too: "Daddy thought it was a good idea for me to get a taste of ... 'how real people lived.'" Another person professes to be an expert at working while stoned, and someone admits to a fascination with walking by the city's lit-up residences and observing "the art on the walls, the books in the bookcases, sometimes people staring out their windows at the passersby as though they were invisible themselves."

The stylized, humorous prose is energized and grounded by people's everyday speech patterns, as well as by palpable details, as of a "wadded bill ... stuffed into a homeless man's limp hand." The San Francisco setting is captured with clarity, too, as with mentions of city landmarks, including the Victorian Painted Ladies. There are also mentions of exclusive clubs, upscale retirement communities, and private dining rooms. The book maintains this sense of place by rattling off street names, itemizing trips to Trader Joe's, and referencing items in the *Chronicle*. All of this contributes to securing and maintaining audience interest, right up until the book's rewarding final twist.

Legacy of Lies is a gripping mystery novel that centers on a family death and a wealth of misdirection.

JOSEPH S. PETE (July 5, 2022)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.