



The Lying Life of Adults

Elena Ferrante

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The pain of adolescence is complicated by family secrets and persistent grudges in Elena Ferrante's devastating novel, *The Lying Life of Adults*.

For thirteen-year-old Giovanna, her father's side of the family has always been a mystery. A desperate curiosity compels her to arrange a visit with her aunt Vittoria, who has been blacked out in every photo her parents own. Enticed by Vittoria's conviction and bluntness, Giovanna starts to pull on the threads of her family tapestry, unaware of how quickly and how thoroughly her life will unravel.

Giovanna's narration is complex and emotional, combining a young adult's rebellion with a child's insecurities. She tries to keep her interest in Vittoria's story a secret. In the end, she can't close her eyes to the terrible realization that the adults she has looked up to her entire life are no better—and are in some ways worse—than the relatives they have always maligned. Just because every story has two sides, she realizes, doesn't make one side right and the other wrong.

The effects of Vittoria's words slither outward to spoil every aspect of Giovanna's life. She falls into a spiral of self-destructive behavior, alternately lashing out and retreating into a private, angry world of her own. Rebellion leaves her feeling hollow in the long run, while attempts at mature acceptance are met with more lies. Giovanna, feeling powerless and frustrated by the consequences of her elders' actions, also struggles with the more ordinary dilemmas that come with growing up. She must forge her own path to adulthood if she is ever to find peace.

The Lying Life of Adults is a gripping novel about coping with change and creating the closure you need to move forward.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (September / October 2020)

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