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# It's Not Like It's A Secret



## Synopsis

This charming and bittersweet coming-of-age story featuring two girls of color falling in love is part *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* and part *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*. Sixteen-year-old Sana Kiyohara has too many secrets. Some are small, like how it bothers her when her friends don't invite her to parties. Some are big, like the fact that her father may be having an affair. And then there's the one that she can barely even admit to herself--the one about how she might have a crush on her best friend. When Sana and her family move to California, she begins to wonder if it's finally time for some honesty, especially after she meets Jamie Ramirez. Jamie is beautiful and smart and unlike anyone Sana's ever known. There are just a few problems: Sana's new friends don't trust Jamie's crowd; Jamie's friends clearly don't want her around anyway; and a sweet guy named Caleb seems to have more-than-friendly feelings for her. Meanwhile, her dad's affair is becoming too obvious to ignore. Sana always figured that the hardest thing would be to tell people that she wants to date a girl, but as she quickly learns, telling the truth is easy...what comes after it, though, is a whole lot more complicated.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The graceful complexity of this first-person narrative is an accomplishment in itself. Sana is a fully realized protagonist with faults and unacknowledged privilege alongside her nuanced experience of identity and "model minority" racism. Sugiura thoughtfully explores intersecting issues of race, immigrant-family relationships, queer romance, and, less explicitly, class dynamics without implying

the significance of one over the others. — Well-paced, brimming with drama, and utterly vital. — Kirkus Reviews, starred review Major and minor supporting characters of every age and both genders are just as credibly realized as Sana as her narration unfolds. — VERDICT — An essential and delightful choice that realistically celebrates a teen's discovery of trust in herself and in others. — School Library Journal, Francisca Goldsmith, Library Ronin, Worcester, MA I am in love with this book. The writing and voice are unbelievable. — Rachael Allen, author of *17 First Kisses* and *The Revenge Playbook* Smart, funny, authentically messy, and sweetly romantic. — Kelly Loy Gilbert, Morris Award nominated author of *Conviction* — "It's a queer coming-of-age story that also tackles big topics like adultery, racism, and the cultural conflicts of immigrant families." (Brightly.com)

Sixteen-year-old Sana Kiyohara has too many secrets. Some are small, like how it bothers her when her friends don't invite her to parties. Some are big, like the fact that she's pretty sure her father's having an affair. And then there is the one that she barely even admits to herself, the one about how she might have a crush on her best friend. When Sana and her family move to California, she begins to wonder if it's finally time for her to be honest with her friends and family, especially after she meets Jamie Ramirez. Jamie is beautiful and smart and unlike anyone Sana's ever known before. The only problems are: Sana is pretty sure Jamie's friends hate her, Jamie's ex isn't totally out of the picture, Sana's new friend Caleb has more-than-friendly feelings for her, and things with her dad feel like they're coming to a head. She always figured that the hardest thing would be to tell people that she wanted to date a girl, but as Sana quickly learns, telling the truth is easy . . . what comes after it, though, is a whole lot more complicated.

Loved this one. Sugiura gracefully tackled so many difficult and sometimes sensitive topics, while also creating fully-fleshed, relatable characters. Sana's voice is spot on. I can't wait to have this gorgeous book on my shelf to share with my students.

I will state my bias up front (I am a relative of the author), but this is a really well-crafted story. I'm not at all the intended target audience, but the story drew me along through its many turns and literally kept me up late wanting to see how it turned out. The writing brings the characters and setting to life with crackling detail and sharp dialogue. Through its characters and their travails, the story offers insights into race, ethnicity, class, sexual identity, age and other often divisive elements

of our culture in a way that hits personally. I recommend it because it does what perhaps all great books, fiction or otherwise, do - it offers a perspective and understanding that you didn't have before.

Sana "coming out" is only one part of this complex, heart-wrenching study of stereotypes and struggling to reveal yourself to those you love most. Sana is a relatable character in how she finds herself messing up the best things in her life and then fights to get them back (just as awkwardly as she lost them). Even things which sound absurd to both her and cross-cultural readers are revealed to be deep philosophies rooted in love and family. Highly recommend.

The story telling is so good that once I started reading the book, I just couldn't stop. The issue of being minority and the illusion of "mainstreaming" experienced from the both ends, in addition to misunderstanding between the minority students offer good topics for the social studies/English classroom discussion. Additional challenges at home and how the protagonist grows through the struggle is worth noting.

Friendship, acceptance, self-discovery are all a part of what the protagonist discovers as she moves to a new West Coast city. Beyond this, she also discovers that there is more than one way to have a relationship, and that sometimes secrets work for both sides. Solid YA read. I'd recommend to anyone who enjoys a page turner about finding your place in the world.

Loved this book - couldn't put it down. Happily, my daughter chose it for her summer reading assignment and she loved it too. Well crafted, not predictable, and relatable characters. Hoping there will be more books!

Fantastic debut novel! The book is as charming as it is insightful and engaging.

When Sana Kiyohara and her family move to California from Wisconsin, she decides it's time to be honest with herself. She has a crush on her best friend, Jamie Ramirez. She's smart, beautiful, and different from anyone Sana's known before. There are a few problems with this - Sana's new friends don't trust Jamie's, Jamie's friends don't seem to want Sana around, and a classmate named Caleb appears to have more than friendly feelings for Sana. Plus, Sana doesn't know how well her strict Japanese parents will react to Jamie as a friend, let alone as a girlfriend. Not to mention, her

father's affair is becoming to obvious for her to just ignore. Sana always thought that the hardest thing would be telling people that she wants to date a girl (and revealing that the truth about her father's affair), but it turns out that it's the stuff that comes afterward is what's really difficult and complicated. I really lucked out with *It's Not Like It's A Secret* by Misa Sugiura. I won an ARC of this YA debut via Epic Reads (it's always exciting to receive unexpected bookmail!) and so far it easily ranks as one of my favorite reads of 2017. I'd even go so far as to say that this is going to be one of my all time favorite YA Contemporaries. YA Contemporary isn't normally one of my go-to genres, but this debut immediately caught my attention as a diverse LGBTQIA contemporary romance with a Japanese-American and Mexican-American at the center. Sana is a great leading character and she feels incredibly real and relatable. She's flawed, makes mistakes, and is kind of selfish; she feels like she could walk out right out of the pages of the novel. Sana also really grows into herself and that's wonderful to see over the course of the story. I can also say the same about Jamie - it was wonderful to get to know her too. I also want to mention that I was also intrigued by reading more featuring Japanese-American culture in YA. I started studying Japanese in college and I'll have to admit that I was pleased to recognize and/ or remember the Romaji that appears (this book uses a different system than the one I've primarily been studying). On top of everything, the author gracefully discusses difficult topics with great skill and sensitivity. Overall, *It's Not Like It's A Secret* by Misa Sugiura is the best YA Contemporary I've read this year and is one of the best YA debuts of the year at that. This coming-of-age novel is an absolute must-read. If you like Becky Albertalli, David Leviathan, and Rainbow Rowell, you will definitely like Misa Sugiura. I'm looking forward to her next project!

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