



Volume 62 | Issue 1

Article 19

5-1-2019

Kirkpatrick's "Everything she didn't say" (book review)

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Recommended Citation

Averill, Gary R. (2019) "Kirkpatrick's "Everything she didn't say" (book review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 62: Iss. 1, Article 19.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2572-7478.2079>

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Book Reviews



Kirkpatrick, J. (2018) *Everything she didn't say* Ada, MI: Revell Publishing. 341 pp. 15.99. ISBN 9780800727017

The title sums up the book; it is about the life of Carrie Strahorn and how her life was shaped by being a dutiful wife and not questioning her husband's actions and demands. This book is based on Carrie's memoirs written in the early 1900s and research of other documents concerning the Strahorns. The fiction part of the book is the author giving Carrie a voice and creating some of the characters. She gives Carrie a voice and feelings by starting each chapter with a diary entry that Ms. Kirkpatrick. These entries create the mood for the chapter. Then Carrie talks about the events as it unfolds. This dialogue shows Carrie's true feelings. Ms. Kirkpatrick had to do some inferring due to the lack of information available but the author does a fantastic job. Last, the author ends with lines from Carrie's memoir for historical reference. This book covers forty years though the author writes about twenty of those years. Immediately the reader sees that the husband is in control of the marriage. Carrie still has a say in the marriage, more so than many in her era. She accompanies her husband to places a woman before her would never have gone. She assists her husband in his literary pursuits. She also has riches and status because of her husband's wheeling and dealing, but what she longs for; stability, friends, a family, and her own identity are fleeting or nonexistent because of her husband's "vagabond ways." She stands up to her husband in her middle years and gets what she has always wanted which she is able to hold on to this life for some years but near her last years, her husband loses everything and she once again is living in a hotel. The book makes the reader look at one's own life and what is important. How far should a wife go in forgoing what she wants in life to make a marriage work and is she responsible for the actions of their husbands? What defines a marriage? This book has a wide audience though more focused towards a female audience. It is an excellent book for young adults, both men and woman. There are questions at the end of the story that can facilitate discussions about life, marriage and what makes them fulfilling. Religion and God are definitely important to Carrie but this not a focal point of the story, the marriage and Carrie in particular is. Kirkpatrick is an award-winning writer in historical fiction, she was a homesteader, and has an incredible skill as a writer. She brings life to a distant past and also makes the reader become Carrie not just an observer. Many readers will emotionally feel Carrie's successes and also her failures. These feelings can last beyond finishing the book and hopefully the reader can reconcile these feelings to make their own life more fulfilling. There are also added sections that include more information about Carrie's life and a discussion with the author.

Reviewer

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