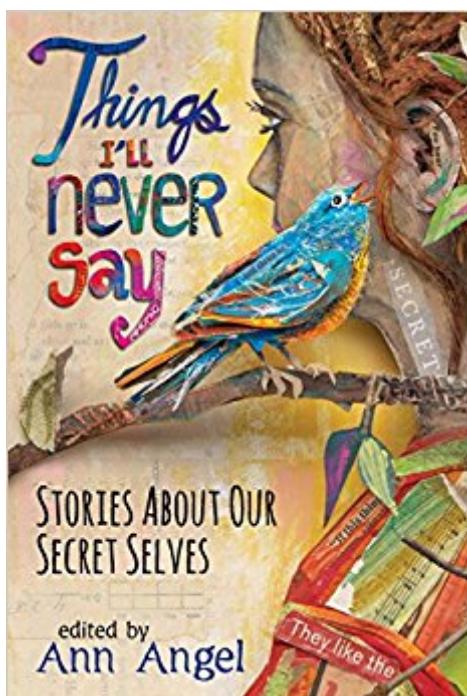


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Things I'll Never Say: Stories About Our Secret Selves



Synopsis

Fifteen top young-adult authors let us in on provocative secrets in a fascinating collection that will have readers talking. A baby no one knows about. A dangerous hidden identity. Off-limits hookups. A parent whose problems your friends won't understand. Everyone keeps secrets—from themselves, from their families, from their friends—and secrets have a habit of shaping the lives around them. Acclaimed author Ann Angel brings together some of today's most gifted YA authors to explore, in a variety of genres, the nature of secrets: Do they make you stronger or weaker? Do they alter your world when revealed? Do they divide your life into what you'll tell and what you won't? The one thing these diverse stories share is a glimpse into the secret self we all keep hidden. With stories by: Ann Angel, Kerry Cohen, Louise Hawes, Varian Johnson, Erica I. Kaufman, Ron Koertge, E. M. Kokie, Chris Lynch, Kekla Magoon, Zoë Ferraris, Marriott, Katy Moran, J. L. Powers, Mary Ann Rodman, Cynthia Leitich Smith, Ellen Wittlinger

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Customer Reviews

Gr 10 Up • In this collection of dramatic short stories by various authors, all of the protagonists have secrets, though some are more intense and life-altering than others. Other than fulfilling this unifying theme, the entries are quite diverse. They span across several genres, including realistic, paranormal, and historical fiction. Regardless of the setting, these tales tackle often taboo subjects, such as inappropriate relations with teachers, gender issues, and mental disorders. Inclusion of drugs, alcohol, swearing, and liaisons between teens and more mature adults

make this work appropriate for older readers. As with any short story collection, the quality of writing varies from one story to another. Some are well written like Chris Lynch's atmospheric and well-paced "Lucky Buoy," while others are poorly executed, like Ron Koertge's "Call Me!" with its feeling of not-quite-coherent randomness. Overall, this collection will resonate with many young adults who have their own secrets as well as readers who vicariously live through the risqué lifestyles of others. VERDICT A very discussible title for fans of Chris Lynch's and Ellen Hopkins's hard-hitting realistic fiction. •Carol Hirsche, Provo City Library, UT

The collection offers many worthy entries. •Kirkus Reviews Rather than providing tidy solutions to the characters' dilemmas, the stories focus on the feelings of entrapment and anxiety that go along with living a lie. •Publishers Weekly This collection will resonate with many young adults who have their own secrets as well as readers who vicariously live through the risqué lifestyles of others.... A very discussible title for fans of Chris Lynch's and Ellen Hopkins's hard-hitting realistic fiction. •School Library Journal This new collection of short stories about secrets is an ideal combination of form and subject.... The balance and diversity that Angel has achieved here is marvelous, and nearly any teen who picks this up will find a bit of herself or himself—or at least a friend—inside these pages. A collection to treasure and share widely. •Booklist The assortment of approaches to the theme of our secret selves offers plenty of surprises for the reader. •Horn Book A thought-provoking collection. •Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

Ann Angel's first outing editing an anthology is an impressive venture. She's gathered a wonderful mix of authors, from established award winners like Chris Lynch and Ellen Wittlinger to talented up to a debut author. The authors aren't just diverse in their name recognition either. *THINGS I'LL NEVER SAY: STORIES ABOUT OUR SECRET SELVES* dwells in those experiences that are hard to talk about, that people like to never think about. It's fitting that it is a very diverse anthology, not only the authors, but also the main characters, who are black and white and Asian and gay and bisexual and transgender and suffering from mental illness. Although not all of the stories are realistic, they do strive for a realism about the teen experience, and the multiplicity of points of view represented help support that anthology-wide tone. I'll admit that the anthology started a little slow for me. The usually reliable Ellen Wittlinger didn't knock it out of the park with "The We-Are-Like-Everybody-Else Game," the story of a girl with a mom who hoards and a friend who might not deserve the title (but one who does). "Cupid's Beaux" by Cynthia Leitich Smith is

charming, and a definite delight to me as a fan of her *Tantalize* series. Will anthology readers who haven't read that series be a little lost?"When We Were Wild" by Louise Hawes and "Call Me!" by Ron Koertge are both delightfully loose stories, slightly naughty and shaggy with narrators who struggle with their knowledge of their own cruelty. Of the sadder stories, I think I liked "Easter" by Mary Ann Rodman best, for the way it captured loss and teenage confusion and dashed hopes."Quick Change" by E.M. Kokie is a little gem about a con artist in a family of con artists, and I want an entire novel about what happens next. (Short stories have been made into novels before! I can hope!) "Storm Clouds Fleeing From the Wind" by Zoë Marriott is the standout of the collection. It's an achingly lovely story set in a kingdom that isn't, about a dancer who cannot be matched, especially when furious. Her bio in the back of *THINGS I'LL NEVER SAY* says that it is related to her novel *SHADOWS ON THE MOON*, which is now a must-read for me. Honestly, I could tell you good things about almost all of the stories in the collection. There were a handful that I didn't care for, but there were also two excellent stories and more than half of the stories were good-to-great. I think that's a good ratio for an anthology. With *THINGS I'LL NEVER SAY*, Ann Angel shows great promise as an anthologist as well as an author.

I'm a huge fan of short stories, so it's been great to see a slight increase in YA short story anthologies out lately. I enjoyed *My True Love Gave to Me*, and I just bought *Slasher Girls and Monster Boys*. One really great anthology I enjoyed lately (with a lot of my favorite VCFA writers!) was *Things I'll Never Say: Stories About Our Secret Selves*, edited by Ann Angel. This anthology includes some really excellent writers, like Cynthia Leitich-Smith, Varian Johnson, Kekla Magoon, Louise Hawes, Chris Lynch, and Ellen Wittlinger. *Secrets* is a marvelously broad and very appropriate topic for an anthology for teens, and the stories range from speculative to contemporary, containing secrets big and small that all have a powerful hold on the characters who are privy to them. While it's difficult to universal comparisons between all of these incredibly diverse stories, this anthology is more about the effect that secrets have on the characters rather than how to solve the problems that the secrets cause. As a result, this anthology is thought-provoking and surprising. I loved the realistic stories from Varian Johnson, Ann Angel, and Kekla Magoon, and Cynthia Leitich-Smith's short story set in her *Tantalize* universe stood on its own, but also will appeal to fans of the series. Most of the stories present situations that are familiar and easily recognizable--parental problems, dating and relationship issues, destructive behavior. Some secrets are larger, more extravagant--secret identities, betrayals, and dangerous relationships. Even the fantastical stories feature secrets that readers will be able to relate to, making for a well-rounded

and exciting anthology.

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