



A Year and a Day: A Novel

Leslie Pietrzyk

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Fifteen-year-old Alice dreams of her first kiss, goes to sleepovers, makes prank calls, auditions for *Our Town*, and tries to pass high school biology. It's 1975, and at first look her life would seem to be normal ... and unexceptional. But in the world that "genuine and fully developed talent" (*Washington Post*) Leslie Pietrzyk paints, every moment she chronicles is revealed through the kaleidoscope of loss, stained by the fact that Alice's mother, Annette, without warning, apology, explanation, or note, deliberately parks her car on the railroad tracks, in the path of an oncoming train.

In the emotional year that follows, Alice and her older brother find themselves in the care of their great-aunt, forced to cope and move forward after their catastrophic loss. Lonely and confused, Alice absorbs herself in her mother's familiar rituals, trying to recapture their connection -- only to be stunned by the sound of her mother's voice speaking to her clear as day as she flips Sunday-morning pancakes. Driven to understand who her mother was, Alice distances herself from her girlfriends and brother as she engages in "conversations" with Annette. As Alice works through her grief, she slowly begins to see Annette as an individual -- separate from simply "my mother" -- and ultimately embraces the bittersweet knowledge that the lives to which we are most intimately connected often remain the most mysterious of all.

Taking its title from the pop-psychology idea that it should only take a year to get over the death of a loved one, *A Year and a Day* is an intense and deeply affecting portrait of how the human heart counters tragedy and can spin hard-won triumph out of the deepest despair. A redemptive, often humorous meditation on growing up and growing into oneself, this is an intimate and heartwarming novel to curl up with and savor.

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