

Love versus loyalty

All Things Light

MARLEEN NELEN

Brothers Luca and Berio are inseparable. Their trapeze act is one of the highlights of the travelling circus they and their mother belong to. At the top of the tent trust between them is literally of vital importance.

When the circus touches down in Iseo for an extended period of time, Luca gets to know Yulia. It isn't long before their budding friendship comes under immense pressure: Yulia is wanted and her life is in danger. In Italy in 1927, with Mussolini and his Blackshirts in power, political enemies of the regime are eliminated in a sinister and brutal way. Luca helps Yulia go into hiding, but to keep her safe he has to do something he has never done before: lie to Berio.

Marleen Nelen has a very measured writing style, which is seemingly simple but very moving. A marvellous book

MAPPALIBRI

'All Things Light' is a tender story set against a very dark backdrop. The threat that has permeated every part of Italian life now also seeps into the circus on the fringes of society. Marleen Nelen gives us beautifully portrayed characters: the quiet and sensitive Luca, the exuberant and demanding Berio and their colourful mother will stay with you for a long time. The choice between love and loyalty is very convincingly drawn, but it's the details that really impress: the mud between the circus wagons, the circus made of wire that Luca plays with, the soft click of Yulia's camera. A filmic and poetic book.

Able to capture human relationships at their most intense, with a good balance between direct expression and suggestion.

JAAPLEEST



AUTHOR



Marleen Nelen (b. 1971) started out as a writer for adults but found her voice as a YA writer. Her style is poetic and image-packed, her observations sharp and her characters and settings true to life. She is also a photographer and visual art often inspires her. *Photo © Kurt Van der Elst*

ORIGINAL TITLE Alles wat licht is (2019, Querido, 256 pp.)

AGE 13+

PRIZES Lavki Prize 2017-2021

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