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Things I Should Have Known

Emma Patton

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Book Review

Things I Should Have Known

Author

Claire LeZebnik

Reviewer

Emma Patton

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Rating

Dependable

Level

Young Adult

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Pages

320

Year

2017

ISBN

9780544829695

Publisher

HMH Books for
Young Readers

Chloe has a hot boyfriend and an effortless social life, but her home life is complicated. Her parents are divorced and her mom is remarried to an obnoxious guy. Chloe also feels the constant pressure of taking care of her sister. Even though Ivy is three years older, she has autism and needs help navigating life. Every time Chloe leaves Ivy behind, she feels guilty, and she constantly worries about Ivy being lonely. So when Ivy expresses an interest in Ethan, another kid with autism from her school, Chloe encourages Ivy to pursue him. What she doesn't know is that Ethan's older brother is none other than David Fields, one of her least favorite people. But Chloe and David have a lot in common. Where Chloe's friends have never understood her relationship with Ivy, David fills the same role in Ethan's life and can relate to the pressure that Chloe feels. As Chloe pushes Ethan and Ivy closer together, she is also surprised to detect a friendship developing between her and David.

This author does an excellent job of writing the character of Ivy. The story illustrates Ivy's limitations without at all demeaning or belittling her. Though the story is mainly about Chloe in her role as sibling and potential caretaker, it also follows Ivy's development, and her journey is just as complex and nuanced as Chloe's, though unique to her own set of challenges. This book would be relatable for anyone who has a loved one with differing abilities in the way that it covers both the joys and challenges of being a caretaker. But it is also appropriate for those who do not personally have experience with autism, and Ivy's character helps to bring awareness to the way that people with autism may experience the world. Though Chloe and Ivy's characters are well written, other characters lack the same depth and tend to just fill the stereotypical high school roles. In this way, the book is not unique in its treatment of a high school story, but it does feature family relationships in a new and interesting way.

*Contains moderate sexual content, and severe language.