

**“Gorgeously written  
and deeply moving, with a main  
character you can’t help but love.”**

**—ADAM GIDWITZ**, Newbery Honor–winning  
author of *The Inquisitor’s Tale*

**IT’S THE SUMMER OF 1967**, and the U.S. Supreme Court’s passage of *Loving v. Virginia*, a ruling that makes interracial marriage legal in all 50 states, begins a cascade of changes for twelve-year-old Ariel Goldberg: Her older sister elopes with a young man from India and moves to bohemian New York City despite her Jewish parents’ disapproval. Ariel is diagnosed with a learning disability. And her family’s Jewish bakery runs into financial trouble.

As change becomes Ariel’s only constant, she’s left to confront both her family’s prejudice at home and antisemitism at school, honing something that will be with her always—her own voice.

*How to Find What You’re Not Looking For* is the story of one of the most pivotal moments in American history—and of one girl’s search for her place within it.

A SYDNEY TAYLOR AWARD WINNER  
A JANE ADDAMS CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARD WINNER  
A NATIONAL JEWISH BOOK AWARD FINALIST  
A JUNIOR LIBRARY GUILD SELECTION  
A 2022 ALSC NOTABLE CHILDREN'S BOOK  
A KIRKUS REVIEWS BEST BOOK OF 2021  
AN AMAZON BEST CHILDREN'S BOOK OF 2021

“Gorgeously written and deeply moving, with a main character you can't help but love, *How to Find What You're Not Looking For* deals with the hardest act in one's fight for justice—confronting the prejudice of those who are closest to us. Hiranandani is a master.”  
—Adam Gidwitz, Newbery Honor-winning author of *The Inquisitor's Tale*

“What's most striking about the book is how kind it is. People learn, forgive, try to do better. In a knee-jerk time (ours), it's powerful to witness Ari's realization that people can grow and change.”  
—*New York Times Book Review*

★ “A splendid historical fiction tale of bravery and determination.”  
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ “A powerful blend of important themes and everyday triumphs and sorrows.”  
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “[E]xplores the benefits and costs of assimilation and the complexity of being both white and a religious minority in America then—and now.” —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“In this moving novel about a turbulent time, Ari and her family discover that what is most important is not what you think you want.”  
—*Booklist*

**VEERA HIRANANDANI**

How  
to Find  
What  
You're  
Not  
Looking  
For



*For my parents,  
who taught me how to be brave.*

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# How to Be the Lazy One

It's harder than you think.

First, lie on your messy bed wearing your Wonder Woman pajamas that are too small because you've had them since you were nine. Then, watch your older sister, Leah, pin up her hair for dance class. She sits in her black leotard at the small white vanity, her back straight as a board, a magazine cutout of Paul Newman taped to the corner of her mirror. She uses at least fifteen bobby pins for her bun. Count in your head while she sticks the pins in.

*One, two, three.* She's rushing because she has to be on the #4 bus by 9:00 a.m. for pointe class at Madame Duchon's Dance Academy. She dances there every day except Sunday. You're not even sure how she spends so much time at dance and still does well in school.

Leah seems to do well at everything.

Not you. You're the lazy one. You're just trying to keep

up, but along with all the other things Leah does, she helps you keep up.

*Four, five, six.*

Ma wishes Leah didn't take dance on Saturdays because of Shabbos, but Leah says it makes no sense for her not to dance if Ma and Daddy work all day at Gertie's, their bakery. Then Ma says Leah's right and that maybe they should be more observant and not work on Saturdays. Daddy says the bakery wouldn't survive if they closed on Saturday in this town and that's more important. They argue about the rules like that sometimes, how Jewish you're all supposed to be.

*Seven, eight, nine.*

On pin ten, Leah suddenly stops and puts her hands over her face. Her shoulders start to shake. You lean forward in your bed, confused, to get a closer look.

Leah hardly ever cries. You're the crier. It's the only way anyone pays attention to you. You cry when you're sad, or mad, or when you watch *Lassie*. Sometimes you even cry when you're extra happy. You get it from Daddy. He's a crier, too.

Leah manages to keep a smile on her face most of the

time. If she's upset, she gets serious and walks away, her shoulders straight, her head held high.

But today, on a warm Saturday in early June, as the sun tumbles through the window and the birds chirp and the smell of Ma's Sanka floats in through the bottom of the bedroom door, Leah sobs into her hands, and it terrifies you.

"Leah," you say, jumping out of bed and over to her side. "Don't cry. What's the trouble?"

She turns to you. She picks up a tissue off the vanity, presses it to her eyes, then blows her nose. "If I tell you a secret, will you promise to keep it forever?" she says.

"Forever?"

"Yes, forever," she says. "It's the biggest secret I've ever had, and if you don't think you can promise, I won't say it."

Keeping a secret is not your favorite thing to do. Secrets make your stomach hurt. You can count on one hand the secrets you've kept. You once took a report card out of the mailbox and hid it in your schoolbag for a week. But you got caught. Sometimes when you hang out with your friend Jane, you make it seem like you have other friends. But you don't. Occasionally you steal

cookies from Gertie's and keep them in a coffee can in your room. You've never had to keep a really big secret before, and certainly not forever.

Leah's cheeks get blotchy, and her eyes start to fill again with tears. "Oh please," she says. "I have to tell someone, and I need it to be you."

Leah saying she needs you—is there anything more special than that? Maybe if you know her secret, some of her specialness will spill over onto you. She bites her lip and grabs your hand.

"Okay," you say, taking a deep breath. "I promise."

She holds up her pinkie and wraps it around yours. "Oh, Ari, something crazy has happened."

"What? What's happened?" A flush of sweat starts collecting on your top lip.

"I've fallen in love," she says, your pinkies still linked together, her eyes still locked on yours. You let go of her pinkie and take your hand away.

"You've fallen in love? How? With who?" you say.

She gets up and starts to pace a little, so you sit down on your bed. You want to give her room.



“I’ve never felt this way about anyone. It’s like I can see my future,” she says.

She looks scared when she tells you this, and it makes you feel a little scared. You haven’t known anyone in love before. You’ve watched the soap opera *Days of Our Lives* with Ma, and it doesn’t look like much fun. It seems that people start having lots of problems when they fall in love.

If you think about it, you’ve been noticing some odd things about Leah, like the way she hums a tune everywhere she goes, even when Ma makes her clean the bathroom on Sundays. She wears her best clothes every day. She leaves a trail of Chanel No. 5 behind her, and she never used to wear perfume. She always seems to be thinking of something else.

“Who is he? Do I know him?” you ask her.

As she walks back and forth, she tells you that the boy she’s in love with is not a boy at all. He’s a young man about to graduate from college. He already enrolled in graduate school this fall because he wants to keep studying and doesn’t want to get drafted into the Vietnam War. She met him six months ago at Rocky’s Records in

town. He's from India, but he lives here now and works at Rocky's after his classes because he loves music.

And he wants to marry Leah.

"Married? Now? You can't be serious," you say as your heart pounds in your ears. You don't know what any of this means, and you don't want anyone to take Leah away from you. How would she have any time to be your sister if she got married? It makes you want to give her secret back.

"I'm eighteen. Ma got married at eighteen," she says, her eyebrows turning angry. "Lots of girls get married at eighteen." She presses her hands to her cheeks as if she's trying to hold herself in.

"I suppose so," you say, still thinking she's lost her mind. But it's true. You think of Betty Campbell and Donna Marino, two girls who got married right after high school. They had their pictures in the local paper, and they looked like the plastic dolls Daddy keeps at the bakery to put on top of wedding cakes.

You remember feeling a little sorry for them, just going straight to the boring grown-up world with no in-between. You thought Leah wanted an in-between.

“When are you going to tell Ma? And Daddy?” you ask her.

Leah shakes her head. “Honestly, I can’t even imagine it. I need more time. Remember, you can’t utter a word. But this isn’t just some silly crush on a boy. This is serious.”

“You’ll have to tell them eventually,” you say. Leah doesn’t reply. “Are you really going to get married? To a boy from India? Is he Jewish?”


“He’s not a boy,” Leah says loudly, and anger washes over her face. She takes a deep breath. “And of course he’s not Jewish.”

“Well, I don’t know.”

“He’s Hindu,” she continues in a smaller voice. “I’m worried about what people will think if we get married.”

You nod slowly. Leah is the one who’s supposed to follow the rules. It’s no secret Ma and Daddy want her to go to college and marry someone Jewish. She already enrolled at Southern Connecticut State for the fall, though if it’s anything like your town, there won’t be many Jewish boys there.

Leah sits back down at the vanity.



“But I’m also worried about what will happen if we don’t. I really love him,” she says and starts to dab her face with her pink powder puff, erasing the streaks her tears left on her cheeks. “Sorry, I don’t mean to be a drag.”

“It’s okay,” you say and go over to her. You put a hand on her shoulder. “You’ll figure it out.” But what you really mean is that she’ll figure out that she’s not in love or thinking about marrying anyone.