



 **STARRED REVIEW**

Indelicate Deception

V.S. Kemanis

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V.S. Kemanis's layered examination of what initially appears to be a love story at the Bay Area epicenter of the flower-power era morphs into a compelling mystery that asks hard questions about race and commitment.

In alternating chapters, *Indelicate Deception* follows Caty, from the 1990s, and her parents, from the early 1970s, until the stories merge and escalate to a chilling conclusion.

Lenore ("Len") is a brilliant law student determined to right society's wrongs. Roy is an aspiring chef, benign and cheerful despite poverty, his PTSD from the Vietnam war, and other challenges. He has a laidback quality that troubles the hyperactive Len. Also challenging the unmarried couple is race. Roy is black, Lenore white, resulting in ostracism both socially and from Lenore's wealthy family, which has virtually disowned her.

From age one, Caty has lived alone with her father, her mother a distant phantom. Caty's growing pursuit of the truth behind why her mother left the family pulses with the page-turning urgency of a thriller. Characters shine with dimension and depth as Kemanis offers honest portrayals of human courage and deep flaws—particularly those of Len. Kemanis also skillfully captures the era's iconic times and moods, from the lingo ("outta sight," "heavy," "can you dig it?") to the paisley, bell-bottomed costumes, to the time's social upheaval.

Crisp, straightforward language is at times deeply poignant, as when Len discovers what being a lawyer really means: "[T]he gulf between the ideal and reality has crept into her soul, portending an impassable moat."

The genuinely chilling revelation of what happened to Caty's mother asks hard questions about what it means to be true to oneself and what we owe to those we love.

Also available as an ebook.