



ALL THE THINGS WE NEVER KNEW

by Liara Tamani

BOOK *Talk*

For Carli and Rex, two Black Texas high schoolers whose futures in basketball look bright, it's love at first sight. Their intense feelings after just one encounter on a basketball court convince them that they are destined to be together, and they quickly come to depend on the happiness they feel together. But while they seem like a perfect match, staying together is not so easy. The family situations they each want to avoid and the things they can't love about themselves stand in the way of their closeness. After uncertainty, misunderstandings, betrayal, and anger strain their relationship, can they find their way back together again? And more importantly, how will their lives change if they each can accept themselves before looking to others for love?

QUESTIONS FOR *Group Discussion*

LOVE. Carli's mom tells her that "love is not just some feeling;" that "there's a deep responsibility to it, and a deep trust. And no matter how your dad *feels*, he's failed to love me." (pg. 274) What does it mean to love someone when love is seen as an action rather than a feeling? Do people treat romantic love and other forms of love (for examples, platonic and familial love) differently? Do you think Carli and Rex are better at some forms of love than others? When do they succeed at loving others, and when do they fail?

SELF-LOVE. When Carli's mom mentions loving herself, Carli thinks, "I wish I knew what that felt like. I don't even know myself. How can I love what I don't even know?" (pg. 275) Do you think it is possible to love yourself before you understand yourself? How does Carli's opinion about this change over time? When Rex breaks up with Carli, he says he can't keep trying to figure her out. Do you believe her internal struggles are to blame for their relationship problems? How do Rex's struggles to love himself affect his relationships—with Carli, with his father, and with the world?

HONESTY, TRUST, AND FORGIVENESS. Carli keeps secrets from Rex—about her family and about herself—telling herself she can't share because she is not ready to face the facts herself. Do you think she had an obligation to be completely open and honest right away, or was Rex expecting too much, based on his own need for closeness? When she discovers her father's secret, Carli is angry with him for keeping it from her. Do you agree with her mom that Carli has to forgive him and work it out because he's her father? Which relationships require forgiveness, and which ones can't be repaired once trust is broken?

EMOTIONAL PAIN AND CRUELTY. Carli's mean behavior when Rex visits her at home and Rex's outburst at the championship both come from a place of emotional pain. Is bad behavior that is rooted in pain more excusable than bad behavior that's simply inconsiderate? How can people become self-aware, to avoid lashing out at those they care about? Do you think Carli and Rex learn from their mistakes?

SOCIAL MEDIA. What role does social media play in Rex and Carli's love story? If this were real life, would this be fine, or over the line? Rex admits his behavior is a bit stalker-like. If Carli didn't share his feelings, this would be a different story. Do we feel differently about the exact same actions depending on the circumstances? Do the ends justify the means in the world of digital morality? What do you think about the video of Rex yelling at Carli that is shared online? Do you admire his ability to get back in the game after the online world judged him?