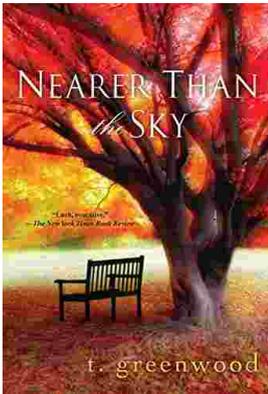


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5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A courageous tale from a fearless writer By Luan Gaines This author is nothing less than fearless in the way she tackles a story. She may flinch, but doesn't back down, keeping the pace consistent while looking over her shoulder to be sure the reader is following. Indie is the young woman struggling to make peace between her present reality and past history. In her childhood Indie relentlessly attempts to create sanity out of insanity. As the middle child, Indie's constant companion is an older brother, Bennie, who is retarded. Their youngest sibling, Lily, is emeshed in the the mother's daily routine, a contestant in children's beauty pageants. Lily's performances in these pageants are weighted with an intolerable burden: whatever the pageant results, the children reap the rewards or punishments of their mother's lack of boundaries or self-restraint. Their father owns a neighborhood bar, and spends much of his time there. The bar becomes another world to the children, one where they find safety and nurture. In contrast, their home is filled with emotional landmines, triggered by the misstep of a careless child. The parents have established a pattern of domain: the father's world is the bar and he doesn't interfere with the homeground unless the escalation of events force him to take action. In this way, he is also a participant in the daily family tragedy. Both Indie and Bennie gravitate to the relative safety of the bar, and spend long hours in the cool darkness it affords. At home, the mother flashes hot and cold, quick with angry outbursts, swiftly punishing hands. The two oldest children learn early to follow their instinct to escape; Lily is not so fortunate, enduring endless visits to the ER for accidents and mysterious ailments. As she matures, Indie lives as far away from her mother as possible. But when Lily calls asking for help, Indie is drawn back into the vortex of her childhood nightmare. She comes face to face with her deepest fears: "...that we inevitably inherit our mother's gestures", that "... silence is also inherited, ... Lily wasn't the only one with a legacy from Ma." The crux of Indie's dilemma is in finding a way to validate her present while admitting the treachery of the past, to cut her losses and create her own safe place. Now there are more than the sisters involved and the consequences are life-changing. She must honestly confront the past and speak about the unspeakable: Bennie's death, her parent's indefensible collusion, and the death of a mother who has been a monster. Indie rises to the occasion with compassion and strength, finally able to defend herself against the infringement of ambient evil that tainted her childhood. She steps fearlessly forward into her own life, shedding the skin that shaped her past and colored her future. 4 of 4 people found the