

NOT ABOUT YOU

A Novel

by

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A thesis

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DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS

of the thesis submitted by

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The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Hillary Ann Colton, and they evaluated the student's presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

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The final reading approval of the thesis was granted by Mitch Wieland, Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The thesis was approved by the Graduate College.

ABSTRACT

This novel-in-progress explores the complexities of single parenting and coming of age in a misogynistic society. Through the perspectives of a recently divided family, we are drawn into the coping mechanisms of characters who have been impacted by the cyclical nature of sexism, alcoholism, and abuse. Told through multiple points of view, the novel aims to explore questions of how internalized misogyny and generational trauma force a person to look at their complicity in the rippling effect of societal expectations, and whether it is possible to break free after a lifetime of trying to survive in a society rooted against female individuality.

Novel Description:

Hazel is a thirty-year-old woman who grew up in a negligent and abusive household. She found herself pregnant at eighteen and decided to keep the baby. After twelve years of marriage, Hazel decides to leave her husband to provide a better life for her children. She lands a job as a waitress at Hooters—the only job she could find after years as a stay-at-home Mom—but she unintentionally deepens the gendered expectations of femininity and motherhood. Her goal is to save enough money to get her paralegal certification, and the deadline is fast-approaching. In a society that is fundamentally rooted against the succession of women—particularly unmarried women—Hazel’s insecurities grow and she must decide what kind of life she wants for her children.

Danny is occupied in construction as a framer and has spent his life working in hard labor to provide for his family. After Hazel leaves him, his drinking begins to spiral. His only goal is to get his family back. He believes that Hazel only needs time, and eventually, she will come back to him. After a night of hard drinking, there is an accident involving their youngest child, Annie, who nearly loses her eye. In order to protect her children, Hazel takes Danny's visitation away. Out of anger, Danny cuts Hazel off financially and doesn't contact the children for months. Danny's long-formed alcoholism spirals out of control as he searches to find meaning in his new life.

Annie, an intelligent and spunky child, struggles with a school bully: Devin Wilson, who teases her about the scar on her eye, and worsens the tension between Annie and Mrs. Trout, her second grade teacher. Annie's anxiety is heightened by her father's absence.

The oldest sibling, Lynn, is quiet and intuitive. Coming up on her thirteenth birthday, she is learning how to fit within a society that prioritizes female sex appeal. From the examples of earlier generations, from her father's neglect, and from the influence of her best friend, Lynn caves under pressure and puts her trust in an older boy who takes advantage of her.

As Hazel's fee deadline for the paralegal course approaches, Danny tells her he is seeking legal advice and wants full custody of the girls. Hazel's recently resurrected relationship with her mother—her only support with the children—falls into shambles. The new love interests of both Danny and Hazel are revealed for what they really are. The further Danny and Hazel pull away from each other, the further their lives turn into something unrecognizable. When Hazel feels like she's failed as a single mother, when

she realizes her family is barely hanging on, Hazel runs back to Danny and tries to help him get sober. There, she must decide for the final time what she wants from her life.