

Don't Kill Me Because I'm Beautiful

H. Gewirtz

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Ending on a note of grace, Don't Kill Me Because I'm Beautiful is a dark thriller in which Hollywood's beauty belies its true evil.

H. Gewirtz's thriller *Don't Kill Me Because I'm Beautiful* is set in glamorous Hollywood, where danger lurks beneath the fame.

Four-year-old Brooklyn is kidnapped, but is then seen walking down Mulholland Drive, clutching her beloved bear and facing death due to exposure. The daughter of Jean, a Hollywood darling, Brooklyn is saved by a stranger, but the darkness that imperiled her is never far away.

Sixteen years later, Brooklyn's life spins out of control. Her mother struggles with memories of her former glory; she dulls her agony with pills and booze. The mother-daughter pair lives in a mansion and goes days without running into each other. Brooklyn has no real friends; she sneaks out to slum it in downtown bars, drinking her future away.

Brooklyn's efforts to claw her way back from the abyss are made central, especially after an accident sends her to the hospital. There, she meets a spiritual guide and becomes a more caring human being. However, her ever-present recklessness plays into the hands of those who would do her harm, and she's hunted by the men who kidnapped her years ago. Brooklyn's naivete makes their menace more palpable.

When Brooklyn falls for Jace, a former child actor, the book takes a romantic turn, too. The pair observe a changed world in which homelessness is rampant and poverty is widespread. Fascinating descriptions of the machinations of the movie industry also come through: of guarded movie lots, insider lingo, and creepy people. Hollywood is depicted as cutthroat; here, reaching for the stars requires traveling through considerable, muddy pain.

Secondary characters are present to flesh out this surreal, vapid world of evil studio executives, prostitutes walking the strip, and a man with psychic powers. Together, they reveal the underbelly of the movie industry, which feeds on the talents of the young and forgets those who have become less useful. But the cast's flaws hold the audience at a distance for too long—until a near-death experience results in new hope. As true villains are revealed and Brooklyn faces new perils, she is finally able to seek help from people who care about her.

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JEREMIAH ROOD (July 16, 2021)

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