

Takes After Her

A novel by Beck Landry

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1. For most of the book, the woman telling the story is not who she says she is. When did you first suspect it, and what tipped you off? Go back to the opening chapters now: which small details read differently the second time?
2. The book is built around one gesture: a hand around a wrist that opens. Jodie let go of her sister. Dot let go of the truth for sixteen years. Wade lets go of being the town villain, and Tatum lets go of revenge. Which of those was hardest for the character, and which was hardest for you to accept?
3. The town decided long ago who was guilty, and the story about Tatum's mother ("some girl from over in Haskell who didn't want her") was repeated until it was true. Who in Carver's Ford benefited from the story being left alone? Has your own town ever done this to someone?
4. Tatum takes the job to be near the woman she believes left her, and leaves something on the porch every day, waiting to be seen. What did those small offerings mean to you as you read, and what did they mean once you knew the truth?
5. The letters say "I saw you let go." Did you believe they came from Wade? When did you start to suspect Dot, and did the handwriting reveal surprise you less than the headlight she kept to herself?
6. Dot protected the wrong girl and let a man carry a murder for sixteen years. By the end she tells the truth, word for word. Is that enough? What does the book seem to think she

owes Wade and Tatum, and what do you think?

7. Grant lost his job in April and never told his wife. Jodie says, in effect, who is she to be angry. How do the two lies compare, and did Grant's lie change how you felt about hers?
8. The real Claire is dead before the book begins and speaks only in the Then chapters and the epilogue. Why do you think the author gave her the last word? What did the epilogue's unfinished sentence do for you?
9. Tatum holds this woman's life in her hand the way Jodie once held her sister's, and she chooses differently, for Lizzie. Was that the right choice? Would you have made it? Talk about the one condition she sets.
10. Jodie keeps her husband, her daughter, and the name she stole, but walks away broke and will spend every holiday across the table from her sister's daughter. The book calls this being punished with being known. Is that justice, mercy, or something else?
11. Robin Sayer could have aired the tip and the voice match and blown the whole thing open. She chose not to. What do you think of a true-crime host making that call, and did her own lost sister earn her the right to make it?
12. The title rests on Tatum: she takes after her real mother in her hands and her ear for the piano. Who else in the book takes after someone, for better or worse? Who would you say Lizzie will take after?

If your group wants to tell Beck how the discussion went, or where it got loud, write to beck@becklandry.com. Those are the best emails.