



Honey

Brenda Brooks

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In Brenda Brooks's *Honey*, two friends reunite following nearly a decade of separation, resuming their relationship with a familiar, sisterly closeness that broadens into erotic intensity.

When Nicole's father is killed in an auto accident, her longtime friend Honey shows up at the cemetery, returning after her mysterious disappearance six years ago. Born on the same day, the women are now in their twenties, with a shared past in the lackluster town of Buckthorn. Honey is attractive, charismatic, and has a shrewd, streetwise confidence. Nicole, more reserved and introspective, was a childhood musical prodigy but now plays piano at the lounge of a local casino.

Honey's unconventional upbringing, including her free-spirited mother and abusive father, is contrasted with Nicole's staid household. Nicole's mother mistrusts Honey, afraid that Nicole might again be abandoned by her friend. When Nicole and Honey become lovers, however, Nicole is overwhelmed by the relationship. Honey's allure—her voice and body, the silver bracelet on her slim wrist—becomes like a vortex, with Honey herself promising to take Nicole to new heights of sensual pleasure.

Like a classic *noir* femme fatale, Honey's vulnerability enhances her powers of seduction. Though she manipulates both sexes, she has also been exploited and molested by men from an early age. Her character is indeed fascinating, but the changes in Nicole's personality and her knowing haplessness under Honey's influence are as compelling.

Even after Honey involves Nicole in murder and transfers money out of her bank account, Nicole insists that she still loves Honey and would "throw herself away" again for her, like she was "meant to do from the start." Sinuous and captivating, *Honey* is a novel about friendship, obsession, and the troubling, even perilous ambiguities behind motivations and desires.

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