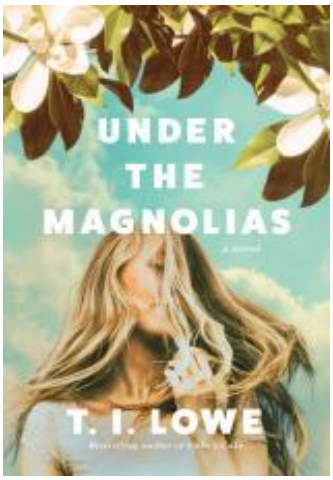
Under the Magnolias

by T. I. Lowe



About the Book

This night not only marked the end to the drought, but also the end to the long-held secret we?d kept hidden under the magnolias.

Magnolia, South Carolina, 1980. Austin Foster is barely a teenager when her mama dies giving birth to twins, leaving her to pick up the pieces while holding her six siblings together and doing her best to stop her daddy from retreating into his personal darkness.

Scratching out a living on the family?s tobacco farm is as tough as it gets. When a few random acts of kindness help to ease the Fosters? hardships, Austin finds herself relying upon some of Magnolia?s most colorful citizens for friendship and more. But it?s next to impossible to hide the truth about the goings-on at Nolia Farms, and Austin?s desperate attempts to save face all but break her.

Just when it seems she might have something more waiting for her --- with the son of a wealthy local family who she?s crushed on for years --- her father makes a choice that will crack wide open the family?s secrets and lead to a public reckoning. There are consequences for loving a boy like Vance Cumberland, but there is also freedom in the truth.

T. I. Lowe?s gritty yet tender and uplifting tale reminds us that a great story can break your heart...then heal it in the best possible way.

Discussion Guide

1. A secluded farm in rural South Carolina in the 1980s provides the backdrop for much of Austin?s story. How does the setting shape the novel?

2. The folks of Magnolia choose to live by the idea of ?out of sight, out of mind.? What are the pros and cons of this mindset?

3. At age 13, Austin loses her mother and gains responsibility of her six siblings as well as her mentally ill father. How does she handle this unexpected life change?

4. Vance Cumberland decides early on that Austin is the woman he wants to spend his life with. Did you like that element of the story? Was Austin right to keep him at arm?s length for so long?

5. Hard work and loyalty are just as important as bountiful crops on Nolia Farms. How do these characteristics help, or hinder, Austin and her family?

6. Austin and her siblings all adopt different coping strategies. Was there one character or coping strategy that you particularly identified with?

7. Each person who comes into the Fosters? lives influences Austin?s life story: Foxy Deveraux, Miss Wise, Morty Lawson, Tripp Murphy, Walynn Posten, Miss Jones. How do each of these people affect her? Which one speaks to you the most? Why?

8. How did Dave Foster?s private struggle with mental illness affect you as a reader? Did you empathize with him? Want to snatch a knot in his backside? Both, at times? Why?

9. Austin tells Miss Wise, ?I also believe forgiveness and getting over being mad is a gift for ourselves, not for the ones who wronged us.? Can you think of any examples of this from your own life?

10. Dave Foster is about as different as they come, and not just because of his mental illness. He says in the novel, ?There?s nothing wrong with being different. What?s wrong is when people refuse to accept it.? How have you seen this play out in our world today?

11. At the end of the book, we read how some of the characters? lives have turned out in the years since the main action of the book. Did any of them surprise you? Which endings did you like the best?

12. Discuss the title of the book, UNDER THE MAGNOLIAS. What are some of the literal and metaphorical examples of hidden things in the story?

Author Bio

T. I. Lowe is an ordinary country girl who loves to tell extraordinary stories and is the author of nearly 20 published novels, including her debut, LULU'S CAFÉ, a #1 bestseller. She lives with her husband and family in coastal South Carolina.

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