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Ring around the Moon: A Novel

Mary Burnett Smith



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In this thought-provoking and powerful novel, a young girl must grow up too soon as she watches her family disintegrate around her.

A cry in the night awakens ten-year-old Amy Beale and alerts her to the difficulties in her parents' marriage. Earlier that steamy evening in July 1940, her mother, Arleatha, witnessed yet another of her husband's infidelities at one of his notorious "rent parties." Amy overhears her sobbing in the middle of the night, as Jack Beale begs for another chance. Arleatha agrees to give him one year. From her bed, a terrified Amy tries to strike a bargain with God: Keep the family together, and she will never do anything bad. Amen.

In *Ring Around the Moon*, an older, wiser Amy looks back on that pivotal year as she chronicles the family's move from a small colored community to an affluent town nearby; the conflict there as she and her brothers, Lonnie and James, adjust to new friends, a new school, and interfering relatives and neighbors.

As the months pass, the struggle between Jack and Arleatha continues. A proud man who feels trapped in his black skin, Jack wants a family but cannot help always looking for "the good life" for himself. Then a terrible incident threatens to break up the family once and for all.

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