



The Sky Isn't Visible from Here

By Felicia C. Sullivan
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Introduction

Days before Felicia Sullivan graduated from college, her mother disappeared; she hasn't been heard from in more than twelve years. It was possibly the last betrayal her mother, a beautiful, volatile, deceitful drug addict, would add to those that built their relationship, which subjected Felicia to a nightmare childhood on the toughest streets of 1980s Brooklyn. Growing up in the close company of dealers, users, and a host of unsavory characters, Felicia became her mother's keeper at a shockingly young age—getting her to the hospital after her overdoses, enduring her cruelty and narcissistic rages, and accepting the abuse or indifference of numerous so-called stepfathers. Years later, damaged and ashamed of her past, Felicia invented a new, brutally hard-partying persona to show to the world: she became her mother.

Affecting, honest, and utterly extraordinary, *The Sky Isn't Visible from Here* is a book about secrets and forgiveness—the story of a young woman unraveling . . . and then putting her life back together again.

Questions for Discussion

1. How did you feel upon finishing the book? Do you think that Felicia is a fighter?
2. The book jumps between different times in the author's life. What purpose does this serve? Do you like it or would you prefer a chronological exposition?
3. Do you find it strange that Felicia's mother appears so protective of her after the incident with Ursula and Lydia, or do you think Rosina just enjoys a chance to vent her anger?
4. Rosina tells Felicia 'Love just a little but never too much.' Do you think Felicia takes this advice later on in her life? Does she continue taking this advice when she changes her lifestyle to live without drugs?
5. During a conversation with Gus, Felicia says 'I am not my mother', yet in so many ways her adult life emulates her mother: pushing away her friends, taking refuge in drinking and drugs. Do you think Felicia is like her mother or not?
6. What do you think of the male characters in the book? What do they have in common? What differences are there between them?
7. In the chapter 'Point of Entry', why do you think the author switches to second person? What effect does this have?
8. What is the distinction between 'Lisa' and 'Felicia'? Are they two separate identities to the author?

About the Author

Felicia C. Sullivan is a graduate of the Columbia University MFA program, a two-time Pushcart Prize nominee, and a *Best American Essays* notable. She is the founder of the critically acclaimed literary journal *Small Spiral Notebook*, and she lives in Brooklyn, New York.