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AWAKE

Elizabeth Graver. Holt, \$23 (320p)

ISBN 0-8050-6540-7

Graver's gracefully written and emotionally rich third novel (after *Unraveling* and *The Honey Thief*) charts a year in the life of a New England family struggling with a heartbreaking burden: a child plagued by xeroderma pigmentosum (XP), an often fatal sensitivity to light. Max Simon, the second son of Anna, an artist, and Ian, a schoolteacher, can't go into the sun unless he's completely covered--even strong lamps can wreak havoc with his health. The closest the nine-year-old Max comes to anything approaching normality is when he, his older brother and parents go off to Camp Luna, a retreat for children with XP, where nights are for activities and daytimes are for sleeping. The camp's director, Hal, a caring, life-affirming widower whose daughter has XP, awakens something in the bitter and tired Anna. Alternating between the present and the past, Graver deftly if slowly sets the stage for the Simon family's return to Camp Luna, where Anna and Hal begin an affair with predictably difficult fallout. No one can doubt that Anna and her family have suffered, but some may find her insufficiently sympathetic; she's so hell-bent on soul searching that she becomes a bore, a poster child for the entitled baby-boomer, mad as hell that life hasn't turned out perfectly. Still, Graver's lyrical portrait of a thoughtful woman in crisis will resonate with many readers. Agent, Richard Parks. (Apr. 7)

Forecast: A national author tour, plus blurbs from the likes of Andrea Barrett, Julia Glass, Carolyn Parkhurst and Stewart O'Nan, should build on the sales of *The Honey Thief* (2001). Graver's short story collection, *Have You Seen Me?* (1991), won the Drue Heinz Literature Prize.

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