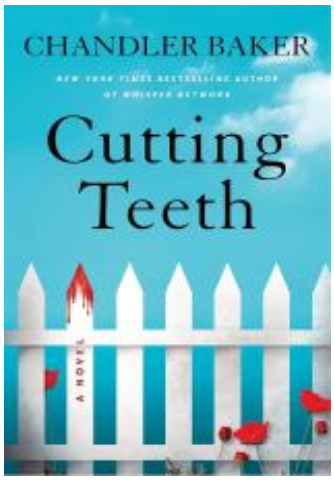
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Cutting Teeth

by Chandler Baker



About the Book

***New York Times* bestselling author Chandler Baker's CUTTING TEETH is a witty, thrilling story of parental love that asks: Is there anything a mother won?t do for her children?**

Darby, Mary Beth and Rhea are on personal quests to reclaim aspects of their identities subsumed by motherhood --- their careers, their sex lives, their bodies. Their children, though, disrupt their plans when an unsettling medical condition begins to go around the Little Academy preschool: the kids are craving blood.

Then a young teacher is found dead, and the only potential witnesses are 10 adorable four-year-olds. Soon it becomes clear that the children are not just witnesses, but also suspects...and so are their mothers. As the police begin to look more closely, the children?s ability to bleed their parents dry becomes deadly serious.

Part murder mystery, part motherhood manifesto, CUTTING TEETH explores the standards society holds mothers to --- along with the ones to which we hold ourselves --- and the things no one tells you about becoming a parent.

Discussion Guide

1. Rhea, Darby and Mary Beth each have different approaches to parenting. How would you characterize their individual philosophies, and with which of these philosophies do you most identify?

2. At the start of the novel, Miss Ollie confronts Rhea about the contents of Bodhi?s lunch box. She later tells Rhea that she cares about the kids in her class as if they were her own children. Does Miss Ollie overstep her boundaries with Rhea? When is it appropriate to express an opinion about someone else?s parenting choices?

3. Renfield?s syndrome is a fictional medical condition that causes those afflicted to crave blood. If such an outbreak of

Renfield?s occurred in a real school, how do you think that community?s reaction would compare to the one in the novel?

4. As Darby deals with the impact of Rhea?s interview in which Rhea suggests parents be ?joyously available? to feed their children blood, Darby ponders the state of parenting: ?Last she checked, intensive parenting was a relatively new trend, but now it?s --- what? --- the norm, the expectation, the baseline standard? Baby enrichment classes, oven-baked sweet potatoes, and patient, positive, lobotomized directives to sit in a child?s feelings with the --- it takes a lot of time and money? (p. 217). How have the expectations of what it means to be a ?good parent? changed across generations? What factors do you think have contributed to those changes?

5. Darby laments about the ?sheer entitlement? her family has to her, ?from Jack all the way up to Griff? (p. 74). Throughout the book, she wants to reclaim parts of herself, particularly her body. Yet, when it?s revealed that Griff is hiding his improv classes and therapy appointments from her, she?s miffed. Is Darby being hypocritical? Is she entitled to that information?

6. At the end of chapter 44, Rhea contemplates Mary Beth?s decision to cover up the crime she believes her daughter committed. She questions: ?Is Mary Beth saying that when it comes to her children there is no line too far afield to cross, or even more, that there is no line at all?? (p. 299). Is there a limit to how far a parent should go to protect their child? How would you go about defining that limit? What do you make of Mary Beth?s final decision?

7. In chapter 41, Rhea sets off a chain of confessions from the parents at Little Academy. One might conclude that no one is as good a parent as they purport to be, nor as bad a parent as they believe themselves to be. What?s a confession you could make that may feel cathartic for others to hear?

8. As Rhea considers coming clean with Marcus about her arrest record, she narrates her belief that ?people love a good redemptive arc for fathers...but mothers? No. There?s no redemption for mothers. Mothers better be born perfect? (p. 197). Is this true? Do you believe mothers are held to a higher standard as parents than fathers? Why?

9. If one of the children were ultimately exposed as having been Miss Ollie?s killer, how do you think it would have impacted their life growing up?

10. Mary Beth believes it is simpler to be someone?s child than to be someone?s parent. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

11. What?s the one thing no one tells you about becoming a parent?

Author Bio

Chandler Baker is the *New York Times* bestselling author of WHISPER NETWORK, a Reese?s Book Club pick, as well as the "Good Morning America" Book Club selection THE HUSBANDS. A former corporate lawyer, she lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband, two small children and even smaller dog. CUTTING TEETH is her third novel for adults.

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