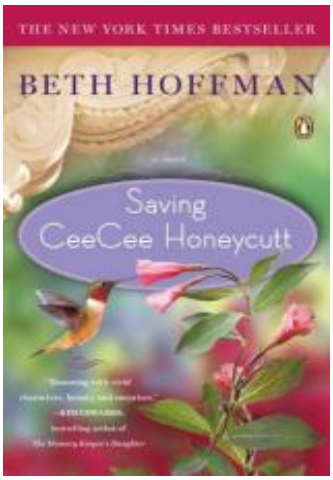
Saving CeeCee Honeycutt

by Beth Hoffman



About the Book

?And just as I drifted off to sleep, I heard her words float in with the breeze, ?It?s how we survive the hurts in life that brings us strength and gives us our beauty.??

Twelve-year-old CeeCee Honeycutt knows about hurts all too well. She lives in a home where shocking events and misery are daily occurrences. CeeCee?s mother, Camille, is lost in a psychotic fantasy world where she?s still a young beauty queen in search of the parade to fame. With a father who purposefully spends very little time at home, it falls to CeeCee to take on the exhausting role of caregiver for her mother, who has become the laughingstock of the entire town.

Then one day Camille is struck and killed by an ice cream truck. What will CeeCee do? Who will take care of her? Certainly not her father, whom she blames for allowing the situation to spin so wildly out of control. Her only friend, an elderly neighbor, is in no position to help. So where is CeeCee to go? The answer arrives when a vintage automobile roars into the driveway. The driver is Tootie Caldwell, a great-aunt from Savannah, who CeeCee?s never even heard of. Upon entering the house, Tootie instantly senses that something is terribly wrong. She volunteers to take CeeCee back to Georgia, and CeeCee?s father eagerly agrees. As unthinkable as the relinquishment of his daughter seems, it just might prove to be the greatest gift he could give her. With nothing but a few meager possessions, CeeCee climbs into her aunt?s car. As they head south, CeeCee observes:

?I had no idea where we were, and to be honest, I don?t think Aunt Tootie did, either. All I knew was that I was flying through the night in a fancy car with a woman who showed up out of nowhere and offered to take me, messed-up life and all, to a place called Savannah.? The beautiful world Aunt Tootie has created in Savannah leaves CeeCee wonderstruck, as does Tootie?s coterie of eccentric friends --- including Oletta, the housekeeper famous for her wise reflections on life and her gooey-sweet homemade cinnamon rolls, and Miz Thelma Rae Goodpepper, the stunning nextdoor neighbor with a taste for the exotic. A summer filled with adventure ensues, and the lessons learned from these fascinating and diverse women help CeeCee take her first timid steps toward becoming a normal little girl.

With lots of love and laughter and some good old-fashioned fun (sometimes at the expense of a local busybody and her curiously missing brassiere), CeeCee begins to heal. Just when her life opens like the promise of a brand-new day, a visit to a peach farm unleashes locked-away memories, and the truth of her mother?s final hours sends CeeCee spiraling into a crisis. But Aunt Tootie and Oletta know all about pain and unresolved grief, and with their loving guidance, CeeCee begins sorting through the events of her childhood. Little by little she discovers a few good memories of her mother hiding in the ruins. Those memories help CeeCee come to terms with her past, and finally she?s free to begin a new life where she can bloom.

Discussion Guide

1. CeeCee tries to escape from the harsh reality of her life by turning to books. When did your own love of reading develop? Did a particular person or event inspire it? What were some books you loved as a child?

2. Camille?s illness left CeeCee filled with shame and despair. Do you think if she had told Mrs. Odell more of what went on inside the house that the elderly woman could have done something? If so, what? Were there any incidents in your youth that brought you shame or that you were afraid to discuss with an adult?

3. This book highlights comparisons between the North and South. What do you think accounts for the differences --- perceived or otherwise --- between people who live on either side of the Mason-Dixon Line?

4. As the story unfolds, a remarkable relationship develops between Oletta and CeeCee --- Oletta becomes the stable and wise mother CeeCee never had, and CeeCee fills the place in Oletta?s heart left vacant by the untimely death of her daughter. Has anyone ever unexpectedly arrived in your life and filled a void? Have you ever filled a void in someone else?

5. After the attack at the beach, Oletta tells CeeCee she must ?reclaim her power? to overcome her fears. What are some times in your life when you had to stand up to reclaim your own power? How did you go about it?

6. Forgiveness is an underlying theme in CeeCee?s story. By eventually forgiving her parents, she frees herself to begin a new life. What people have you forgiven, and how hard was it to do? What were the rewards?

7. Aunt Tootie and all her friends make an art out of making people feel welcome. How do the various women welcome CeeCee into their ranks? What about their welcome for Mrs. Odell? What are some particular times when you?ve received a warm welcome? What about the opposite?

8. The incident at the peach farm followed by the days CeeCee spends in recovery mark a poignant turning point in her life. Has there ever been a time when you faced your own turning point? Was there anyone who helped you? What gifts were waiting for you at the end of your journey?

9. When Aunt Tootie tells CeeCee that she?s ?a very popular lady,? it has a profound effect on her. What are some other times in the book when CeeCee takes an adult?s words to heart --- good and bad? What are some particularly memorable things that were said to you as a child --- positive or negative?

10. At several key moments in the story, CeeCee finds that her Life Book is being revised. Are there any other words or terms for ?Life Book? that you?ve heard? What are some moments in your life when you knew an indelible memory was being made? When was the last time you recall thinking, ?I?ll remember this forever??

Author Bio

Beth Hoffman was the president and owner of a major design studio in Cincinnati, Ohio. She sold her business to pursue writing full time. Beth lives in Newport, Kentucky with her husband and two very smart cats, in a beautiful historic home that she completely renovated.

Critical Praise

?Anyone in need of a Southern-girl-power fix will find [SAVING CEECEE HONEYCUTT] engaging.?
?*People*

?A peach of a novel.?
?*Ladies? Home Journal*

?SAVING CEECEE HONEYCUTT is an absolutely delightful debut novel packed full of Southern charm, strong women, wacky humor, and good old-fashioned heart. From the moment you first step into young CeeCee's unique world, you'll never want to leave.?
?Kristin Hannah, bestselling author of FLY AWAY

?This book unfolds like a lush southern garden, blooming with vivid characters, beauty, and surprises.?
?Kim Edwards, bestselling author of THE MEMORY KEEPER?S DAUGHTER

?I barely stopped laughing, even as my heart broke and broke again for CeeCee?Beth Hoffman has written her heart out in this novel that will clearly be the first of many.?
?Luanne Rice, bestselling author of THE LEMON ORCHARD

?Charming, disarming, sweet as the scent of magnolias on a Southern summer night.?
?Mary Kay Andrews, bestselling author of LADIES? NIGHT

?A Southern charmer.?
?*Publishers Weekly*

?Exemplifying Southern storytelling at its best, this coming-of-age novel is sure to be a hit with the book clubs that adopted Sue Monk Kidd?s THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES.?
?*Library Journal*, starred review

Saving CeeCee Honeycutt

by Beth Hoffman

Publication Date: October 26, 2010
Genres: Fiction
Paperback: 320 pages
Publisher: Penguin Books
ISBN-10: 0143118579
ISBN-13: 9780143118572