The Overnight Guest

by Heather Gudenkauf



About the Book

A woman receives an unexpected visitor during a deadly snowstorm in this chilling thriller from *New York Times* bestselling author Heather Gudenkauf.

She thought she was alone...

True crime writer Wylie Lark doesn?t mind being snowed in at the isolated farmhouse where she?s retreated to write her new book. A cozy fire, complete silence. It would be perfect, if not for the fact that decades earlier, at this very house, two people were murdered in cold blood and a girl disappeared without a trace.

As the storm worsens, Wylie finds herself trapped inside the house, haunted by the secrets contained within its walls --- haunted by secrets of her own. Then she discovers a small child in the snow just outside. After bringing the child inside for warmth and safety, she begins to search for answers. But soon it becomes clear that the farmhouse isn?t as isolated as she thought, and someone is willing to do anything to find them.

Discussion Guide

1. With Wylie?s tragic history, why do you think she would choose to be a true crime writer where she is continually faced with the brutal realities of violence and its impact on victims and their families? Why do you think Wylie felt the need to return to Burden and her childhood home in order to write her book?

2. Discuss the rural setting of the novel. How do you think living in Burden shaped the characters? How would the story be different if it was set in a large city?

3. The child says, ?It isn?t the dark you should be afraid of? It?s the monsters who step out into the light that you need to

fear.? What do you think they meant by this?

4. Wylie and Becky vowed to be ?sisters forever.? After all that they?ve been through, what do you think their friendship will look like? Will it last? Why or why not?

5. THE OVERNIGHT GUEST is set in a blizzard and in the scorching heat of summer. What role does weather play in the story, both literally and metaphorically?

6. The child says there are three kinds of dark. What is the relationship that each of the characters have to darkness? How does it change throughout the novel?

7. Parenthood is a common theme throughout the story. How does it manifest itself throughout the story? How did each of the characters step into that role?

8. Wylie, Becky and Josie have been through so much. Where do you see them a year from now? Five years? Twenty?

9. Discuss the ways in which the idea of being a prisoner is explored throughout the story for each of the characters.

10. By the end of the novel, we learn secrets that change the way we think about certain characters and the way the characters see one another. What character do you think changed the most over the course of the book? How did your opinions of the characters change throughout the story?

Author Bio

Heather Gudenkauf is the Edgar Award-nominated, *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of 11 novels, including THE OVERNIGHT GUEST, EVERYONE IS WATCHING and THE PERFECT HOSTS. Her debut novel, THE WEIGHT OF SILENCE, was an instant *NYT* bestseller and remained on the list for 22 weeks. Gudenkauf?s critically acclaimed novels have been published in over 25 countries and have sold over 2.5 million copies worldwide. Her books have been featured on many "Best Of" roundups, including lists by the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, NPR, Amazon, Apple Books, Goodreads and more.

Heather was born in Wagner, South Dakota, the youngest of six children. At one month of age, her family returned to the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota where her father was employed as a guidance counselor and her mother as a school nurse. At the age of three, her family moved to Iowa, where she grew up. Having been born with a profound unilateral hearing loss (there were many evenings when Heather and her father made a trip to the bus barn to look around the school bus for her hearing aids that she often conveniently would forget on the seat beside her). Heather tended to use books as a retreat, would climb into the toy box that her father?s students from Rosebud made for the family with a pillow, blanket and flashlight, close the lid, and escape the world around her. Heather became a voracious reader and the seed of becoming a writer was planted.

Heather lives in Iowa with her family and a very spoiled German Shorthaired Pointer named Lolo. In her free time, Heather enjoys spending time with her family, reading, swimming and hiking. She is currently working on her next

novel.

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Publication Date: January 25, 2022
Genres: Fiction, Psychological Suspense, Psychological Thriller, Suspense, Thriller
Paperback: 352 pages
Publisher: Park Row
ISBN-10: 0778311937
ISBN-13: 9780778311935