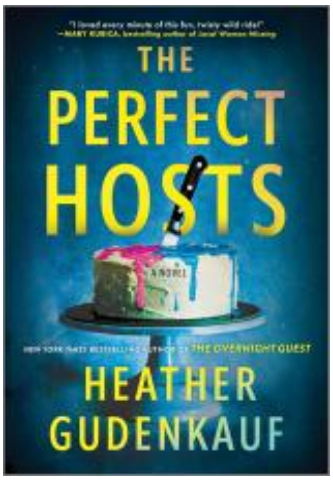
The Perfect Hosts

by Heather Gudenkauf



About the Book

A couple?s gender reveal party turns deadly, and everyone is a suspect, in this gripping thriller from the *New York Times* bestselling author of THE OVERNIGHT GUEST.

Is it a boy or a girl? They would die to know.

Madeline and Wes Drake have invited 200 of their closest friends and family to their sprawling horse ranch for the most anticipated event of the year: a ?pistols and pearls? gender reveal party so sensational it is sure to make headlines. But the party descends into chaos when the celebratory explosive misfires, leaving one woman dead and a trail of secrets.

As the aftershocks of the bloody party ripple across the small town, Agent Jamie Saldano is brought on the scene to investigate. Battling his own demons from the past, Saldano unearths a web of deceit spun around the Drakes. The appearance of some unexpected houseguests only deepens the mystery. And as tensions mount, it becomes clear that the explosion wasn?t just an unlucky accident. But who was the target, and why? As the shadow of a killer looms, the happy parents-to-be must unravel the truth before it?s too late.

Discussion Guide

1. What were your initial thoughts about Madeline and Wes Drake and their decision to host such a large, over-the-top gender reveal party?

2. How did the sprawling horse ranch and ?Pistols and Pearls? theme influence the tone of the story? Did the setting feel like a character in itself?

3. How did social status, reputation and appearances drive the characters? actions? What role did wealth and privilege

play in shaping the narrative?

4. Without revealing too much, what did you think about the explosive inciting incident? Did you see it coming? How did it shift your expectations?

5. What were your impressions of Agent Saldano? How did his background, methods or motivations shape the investigation?

6. How are family dynamics explored throughout the novel?

7. How does the novel explore the idea that everyone is hiding something? Were there any characters whose secrets genuinely surprised you?

8. What does the title THE PERFECT HOSTS mean to you after finishing the book? Who or what do you think the title truly refers to?

9. What do you think is next for Madeline, Lucy and Wes? What does Mellie have up her sleeve?

10. What do you think the author is saying about public image vs. private truth? How does this theme resonate in today?s world of social media and curated lives?

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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