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These Things Hidden

by Heather Gudenkauf

About the Book

Allison Glenn tried to hide what happened that night...and failed. The consequence? Five years in prison. Now she's free. But secrets have a way of keeping you caged...When Allison is sent to prison for a heinous crime, she leaves behind her reputation as Linden Falls' golden girl forever. Her parents deny the existence of their once-perfect child. Her former friends exult in her downfall. Her sister, Brynn, faces the whispered rumours every day in the hallways of their small Iowa high school. It's Brynn --- shy, quiet Brynn --- who carries the burden of what really happened that night. All she wants is to forget Allison and the past that haunts her. But then Allison is released, and is more determined than ever to speak with her sister. Now their legacy of secrets is focused on one little boy. And if the truth is revealed, the consequences will be unimaginable for the adoptive mother who loves him, the girl who tried to protect him and the two sisters who hold the key to all that is hidden.

Discussion Guide

1. Charm, Claire and Allison all serve as Joshua?s mother at some point in the novel. In the end, who is the best mother? Why do you think so? How does each of these characters evolve throughout the story?

2. The women in the story all love Joshua in their own way. What else do they have in common? What are their differences?

3. Describe Charm?s relationship with her mother. How does Charm demonstrate her determination to be different than her mother? What qualities do they share?

4. Olene, the director of the halfway house where Allison resides, tells her to ?meet the world with hope in your heart.? What does this quote mean for each of the main characters? What does it mean for your own life?

5. Water is consistently referenced throughout the novel. What is its significance? What message do you think the author is trying to relate to the reader?

6. Many of the characters in this novel have hopes and expectations for their family members that are not met. How do the various characters deal with their disappointment? Are their reactions justified? Do you relate to this in your own life?

7. We see glimpses of Allison and Brynn?s parents through each girl?s eyes. How have their parents shaped each girl? How have their roles in their family defined their relationship? How have your parents shaped you?

8. How does public perception of Allison and Brynn differ from how the sisters view themselves --- and each other? How does this change throughout the book? How did your perceptions of Brynn and Allison change as you learned more about each character?

9. It is Christopher that connects Allison to Charm, yet his presence in the story is seen only through the eyes of women in his life. What was your impression of Christopher? Why do you think Allison fell in love with him?

10. In **These Things Hidden**, several characters take on the role of a parent --- for example, Devin, Olene, Gus --- for a child to whom they are not biologically related. What makes a good parent? Has there been anyone in your life who has represented the role of a parent for you? Have you done this for anyone in your life?

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.

Critical Praise

"Fans of Jodi Picoult will devour this great thriller."

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