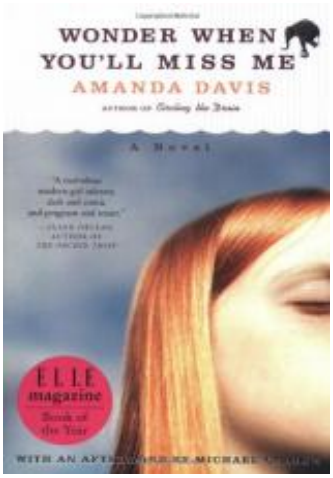
Wonder When You'll Miss Me

by Amanda Davis



About the Book

At fifteen, Faith Duckle is socially awkward, overweight, and shunned by her high school classmates. After committing a violent act of revenge, she runs away from home, accompanied by the ghost of her formerly fat self. She sets off in search of her one friend, Charlie. Her quest takes her to Nashville, to Atlanta, and eventually to the circus where she soon finds herself enmeshed in a fun, frenetic, new world and its colorful cast of characters. As she navigates the complex adult world of shifting allegiances, entrenched hierarchies, and demanding jobs (cleaning up after the elephants), Faith gains confidence, and fashions a new identity for herself. As the circus wends its way towards a performance in her hometown, Faith must face her deepest fears and decide how she is going to live with her past and forge a new future.

Written with a vividness and emotional intensity rare in contemporary fiction, **Wonder When You'll Miss Me** is a compelling and original coming-of-age story. It gives readers a fascinating glimpse into the inner workings of the circus and the mind and heart of an extraordinary young woman.

Discussion Guide

1. The epigraph for the book is by James Baldwin: "And I was yet aware that this was only a moment, that the world waited outside, as hungry as a tiger, and that trouble stretched above us, longer than the sky." Why did the author choose this quote? Does it take on different meaning after you've read the book?

2. Why do you think Davis chose **Wonder When You'll Miss Me** as the title? To whom is this statement addressed?

3. Why do you think Davis named her narrator Faith? How is the name significant? What about other characters' names?

4. When Faith decides to join the circus, the fat girl tells her she's coming along. "You need me like you wouldn't

believe." Why does Faith need the fat girl? What does the fat girl give her? How does Faith's relationship to the fat girl change over the course of the novel?

5. Faith agonizes about whether or not to exact revenge. Does she do the right thing in attacking Tony Giobambera? In what ways does this single act change her life forever?

6. Why does Faith leave home? What is she looking for? What does she tell herself she's looking for? Why?

7. What does the circus give Faith that her life back home could not? How is she treated by those who work in the circus? What do they demand of her? What enables her to succeed in this strange environment? In what ways is the circus a saner and safer environment than her home and her high school?

8. Why is it so hard for Faith to trust people? In what ways has her trust been shattered? How is she able to regain her ability to trust others?

9. When Faith finally calls home, her mother asks, "How could you do this to me?" What does this question suggest about her mother's feelings for Faith? What kind of woman is her mother? In what ways has she failed Faith?

10. When Elaine rehires Charlie and Marco, she tells Faith: "I believe in second chances ... I believe people can change and I believe that people deserve to redeem themselves." Do you think Charlie and Marco will redeem themselves? Has Faith redeemed herself? Is Elaine right in thinking people should be given a second chance? Should someone like Tony Giobambera be given a second chance?

11. Charlie counsels Faith: "Live a round life and you have no place to hide from yourself and nothing to run from." What does he mean? Why is the idea particularly resonant with Faith? At the end of the book, is she moving towards living a round life?

12. In what ways is Faith's story extraordinary? In what ways is it typical? What does it tells us about the struggles of teenage girls in America today? What does it tell us about the often abusive treatment of kids who are overweight or otherwise different in American high schools?

13. At one point Faith asserts that it was the fat girl who committed the crime. Does she later take responsibility for all of her actions?

14. How is Faith different at the end of the novel? In what important ways has she grown up? What experiences have most changed her?

15. At the end of the novel, Faith says: "I'm going to climb up there fly ... I'm going to flip and twist ... If I fall, someone is going to catch me." Why does Faith have this newfound confidence? Who will catch her?

Author Bio

Amanda Davis was raised in Durham, North Carolina. She was tragically killed in a plane crash on her way to her childhood state where she was scheduled to promote her debut novel, **Wonder When You'll Miss Me**, published in

February 2003. She resided in Oakland, California, where she taught in the MFA program at Mills College. Davis also authored **Circling the Drain**, a collection of short stories. Her fiction, nonfiction, and reviews have been published in *Esquire, Bookforum, Black Book, McSweeney's, Poets and Writers, Story, Seventeen,* and *Best New American Voices 2001.*

Critical Praise

"Amanda Davis writes gently, even poetically about extraordinary brutality. She has a distinctively creepy, even noirish sensibility."

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