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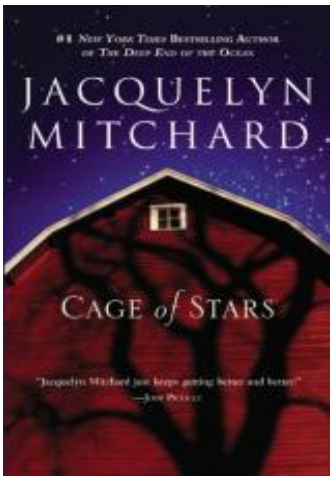
Cage of Stars

by Jacquelyn Mitchard



About the Book

The author of **The Deep End of the Ocean**?Oprah's first Book Club selection?delivers a compelling, emotionally charged tale of tragedy, revenge, and redemption.

12-year-old Veronica Swan's idyllic life in a close-knit Mormon community is shattered when her two younger sisters are brutally murdered. Although her parents find the strength to forgive the deranged killer, Scott Early, Veronica cannot do the same. Years later, she sets out alone to avenge her sisters' deaths, dropping her identity and severing ties in the process. As she closes in on Early, Veronica will discover the true meaning of sin and compassion, before she makes a decision that will change her and her family's lives forever.

Discussion Guide

1. Why do you think this book is titled **Cage of Stars**? It?s a wonderful visual image, but what might it mean?

2. What real-life case does the situation in this book evoke for you? Do you believe that mental illness is a legitimate defense when a person commits a terrible crime? Is justice served if the person is released from an institution?

3. Who is to blame for this crime? Could it have been prevented? Can a random act of violence ever be prevented? Do any of the survivors feel guilty? Do they bear any responsibility in the deaths?

4. At one point, after reading a letter from Miko, Ronnie says ?I was the only one still . . . stuck.? Do you think this being ?stuck? is related to Ronnie?s choice of vengeance over forgiveness? How else does her quest for ?justice? affect her life?

5. Ronnie does not carry out her plan for revenge, but if she had, how would you rewrite the end of this story?

6. Talk about Ronnie?s relationship with her parents. Do you think she is closer to her father than her mother? Why?

7. Ronnie says, at the beginning of chapter fourteen, that ?I think every religion must have been started by a person who loved someone who died.? What is your response to that? True or false?

8. Looking at Ronnie?s life and that of her parents?do you believe that someone can love and hate at the same time? Do you think a person can go beyond grief and tragedy, even when the loss is as great as the murder of two innocent children? If yes, what behaviors can help that happen?carrying out an act of vengeance or offering forgiveness?

9. How much does the Swan family being Mormon influence this story? Would this story be radically different if the family had been Jewish, Muslim, Roman Catholic, or Friends (Quakers)? Would a family without any strong religious affiliation have responded to tragedy in the same way as the Swans?

10. The names of the characters in this book are unusual. Do you think any of them have symbolic meaning? Which ones?

11. Ronnie has an exceptionally close friendship with Clare. Talk about its importance in Ronnie?s emotional life.

12. What do you think ultimately stops Ronnie from carrying out the kidnapping of Juliet or from letting Scott Early die?

13. Ronnie?s landlady, Mrs. Desmond, assesses Ronnie?s character at their first meeting. On what does she base her judgment? Is she right? What traits or behaviors are the truest reflection of character?

14. Why does Ronnie fall in love with Miko and vice versa? Is true love a choice or an act of fate?

15. The story has a happy ending, and a symbolic one. Discuss what happens in the final chapter, when it happens, and what message it conveys.

Author Bio

Jacquelyn Mitchard is the award-winning, *New York Times* bestselling author of 12 novels for adults, seven novels for teenagers, and five children?s books. These include THE DEEP END OF THE OCEAN, the inaugural selection of the Oprah Winfrey Book Club. She is also a professor of creative writing whose short stories, articles, essays and book reviews have been widely published. A native of Chicago, she now lives on Cape Cod with her family.

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