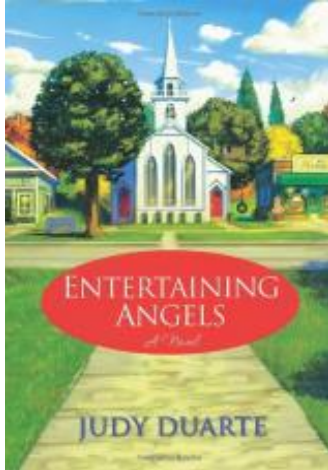


Entertaining Angels

by Judy Duarte



About the Book

From the author of the heartwarming **Mulberry Park** comes an uplifting, unforgettable new novel that proves that though our path through life sometimes takes us in unforeseen directions, it may also lead us to the places and the people we need most?

As a teen, Kristy Smith spent her nights dreaming of a college scholarship --- dreams that ended abruptly when she became pregnant. Now Kristy works hard to support her young son, Jason, and her ailing grandmother, staving off regrets about the chances that slipped away.

When Craig Houston became a pastor, he envisioned making a difference in some distant, poverty-stricken country, not dealing with youth groups and shut-ins in a tidy suburb like Fairbrook. But things aren't always what they seem. Soon, Craig finds locals who need guidance even if they'll never admit it --- like Kristy's best friend, Shana, who's always strived to be the perfect daughter; Renee, a pregnant teen trying to make it on her own; and Kristy herself, a vibrant and loving young woman unaware of just how much she has to offer. One by one, the residents of Fairbrook are about to learn that the future can surprise and redeem us, especially when there is courage and true friendship in abundance, and a little help from an unexpected source?

Discussion Guide

1. When Jesse met Craig at the Fairbrook city limits sign, he said, "Things aren't always what they seem." People often make false assumptions, which can be damaging to themselves and to others. Kristy made one such assumption when she accused Renee of stealing. As a reader, you knew the truth ahead of time. Did you have an emotional response to Kristy's false accusation? Did she lose favor in your eyes? Why or why not?
2. While reflecting on the time when she and her mother had been homeless, Kristy remembered what it felt like to be

seen as an apparition rather than a real person. But we're here, she'd wanted to shout. And we're hungry. Don't pretend you can't see us. Some people avoid making eye contact with those who make them feel uncomfortable. We've all been guilty of it at one time or another. Why do you think that is?

3. Jason missed not having a father, Danny's dad was in prison, and Tommy's father left his wife and kids for another woman. While the kids discussed absent fathers, Renee reached over, patted Jason on the knee, and said, "My dad hasn't been in my life for almost as long as I can remember. And the way I see it, sometimes having a dad can be more trouble than it's worth." What were your thoughts about that discussion? Do the details surrounding a father's absence make it any tougher or easier for a child? Was Renee reflecting upon her own experience?

4. Jesse said, "Life's a journey with twists and turns and potholes..." Later, after talking to Jesse, Gram told Shana, "...life is a journey. Sometimes the scenery is lovely, and at other times, the sky is dark and gloomy, the road full of potholes. But along the way, there are lessons to learn. And those lessons come in the strangest ways." Whose journey had the most impact on you while you were reading? How does this relate to your own life?

5. In the author's first novel, **Mulberry Park**, many of the characters saw their faith shattered along life's journey. In **Entertaining Angels**, many of the characters had their dreams shattered. Choose one character and explain what you learned about how he or she handled losing his or her dream.

6. Jesse used a fairy tale about a princess who forgot her own value. Then he told Kristy not to sell herself short. How did that fairy tale speak to you?

7. The author addressed several similar conflicts, including lost dreams and altered game plans. Which of the characters struggling with regret and disappointment did you relate to best, and why?

8. Lorraine (Gram) told Shana, "Mistakes and sins are a dime a dozen. We all make them. God's forgiveness comes easy, but it's our own that's hard." Then she used a plastic Army man as an analogy while talking to Shana. "You're burdened by guilt," she said, "and you've asked God to take it. He's willing, but he's not going to jerk it out of your hands. You have to release it." What things (or old baggage) do people tend to hang on to?

9. The following are Jesse-isms. Choose one that hits home with you and share why: (a) Things aren't always what they seem. (b) Donations are fine and are needed some- times, but you need to do some actual foot washing rather than offer to pay for someone's pedicure. (c) You can't do anything about someone else's attitude. You can only change you own. (d) God doesn't give a person a dream without also giving the power to make it come true. But that doesn't mean it won't take a great deal of work on your part. (e) A wise man once told me that the essence of mental health is knowing you have options. (f) You're doomed to make the same mistakes that your parents made if you don't make some changes --- mistakes that will make you unhappy for a very long time. (g) Sometimes confrontations are the only way out.

10. Have you ever encountered a stranger who touched your life in an unexpected way? Have you ever wondered whether you've been visited by an angel?

Author Bio

Judy Duarte's unpublished stories won the coveted Emily (West Houston RWA Chapter) and Orange Rose (Orange County RWA Chapter) awards, but also earned her the status of a double RWA Golden Heart finalist in 2001. With her third *Fairbrook* novel, she once again gives readers a novel of love, hope and second chances, sure to appeal to readers of Debbie Macomber, as well as fans of inspirational fiction. She lives with her family in Oceanside, California.

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