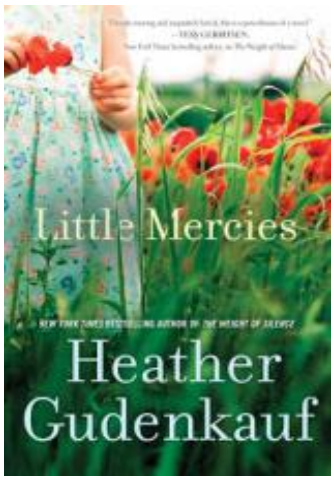
Little Mercies

by Heather Gudenkauf



About the Book

In her latest ripped-from-the-headlines tour de force, *New York Times* bestselling author Heather Gudenkauf shows how one small mistake can have life-altering consequences?

Veteran social worker Ellen Moore has seen the worst side of humanity --- the vilest acts one person can commit against another. She is a fiercely dedicated children's advocate and a devoted mother and wife. But one blistering summer day, a simple moment of distraction will have repercussions that Ellen could never have imagined, threatening to shatter everything she holds dear, and trapping her between the gears of the system she works for.

Meanwhile, 10-year-old Jenny Briard has been living with her well-meaning but irresponsible father since her mother left them, sleeping on friends' couches and moving in and out of cheap motels. When Jenny suddenly finds herself on her own, she is forced to survive with nothing but a few dollars and her street smarts. The last thing she wants is a social worker, but when Ellen's and Jenny's lives collide, little do they know just how much they can help one another.

A powerful and emotionally charged tale about motherhood and justice, LITTLE MERCIES is a searing portrait of the tenuous grasp we have on the things we love the most, and of the ties that unexpectedly bring us together.

Discussion Guide

1. Like many parents, Ellen struggles to balance her personal and professional lives. Discuss how you face maintaining that precarious balance between home and work.

2. Ellen?s former client Jade steps in to save Avery?s life and Ellen finds herself being seen as an unfit mother. Talk about this reversal of roles. How do you think this changed Ellen?s view of the parents she works with and how they think of Ellen? Does this change your opinion of parents who might have experience in the child welfare system?

3. Discuss the ways parenthood and adult-child relationships are portrayed in the novel. Think about Jenny?s relationships with her father, mother, Maudene, her father?s friend-girls and Ellen?s relationship with her own children and the children she works with as a social worker.

4. Discuss the ways parenthood and adult-child relationships are portrayed in the novel. Think about Jenny?s relationships with her father, mother, Maudene, her father?s friend-girls and Ellen?s relationship with her own children and the children she works with as a social worker.

5. Ellen is charged with a felony and potentially faces a prison sentence. Do you think she should have to serve time behind bars? Why or why not?

6. What scenes or developments in the novel affected you most?

7. Adam quickly forgives Ellen for leaving Avery in the hot car. How would you react in a similar situation? Does Ellen deserve forgiveness? Do you think she will be able to forgive herself?

8. Maudene places herself in a precarious situation by taking wayward Jenny into her home. Discuss the possible implications of this decision. What would you have done if faced with a similar situation?

9. How do Ellen and Jenny change over the course of the novel? Which character changes the most, which the least?

10. How did your opinion of Jenny?s mother change over the course of the novel?

11. In Jenny?s young life she has already faced so many obstacles: poverty, abuse, struggles with school, a runaway mother and an unpredictable father. What do you think will become of Jenny?

12. What does the title LITTLE MERCIES mean to you?

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

?An electrifying ride?I dare you to forget it.?

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