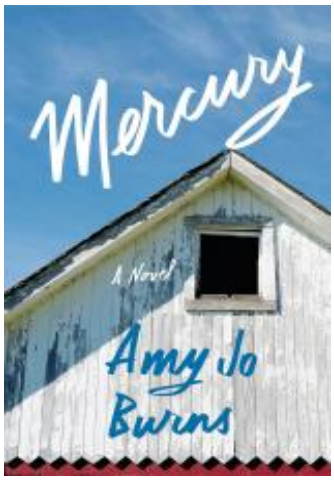
Mercury

by Amy Jo Burns



About the Book

A roofing family?s bonds of loyalty are tested when they uncover a long-hidden secret at the heart of their blue-collar town --- from Amy Jo Burns, author of the critically acclaimed novel SHINER.

It?s 1990, and 17-year-old Marley West is blazing into the river valley town of Mercury, Pennsylvania. A perpetual loner, she seeks a place at someone?s table and a family of her own. The first thing she sees when she arrives in town is three men standing on a rooftop. Their silhouettes blot out the sun.

The Joseph brothers become Marley?s whole world before she can blink. Soon, she is young wife to one, The One Who Got Away to another, and adopted mother to them all. As their own mother fades away and their roofing business crumbles under the weight of their unwieldy father?s inflated ego, Marley steps in to shepherd these unruly men. Years later, an eerie discovery in the church attic causes old wounds to resurface, and suddenly the family?s survival hangs in the balance.

With Marley as their light, the Joseph brothers must decide whether they can save the family they?ve always known --- or whether together they can build something stronger in its place.

Discussion Guide

1. Can you relate to any of the family dynamics presented in the book? Does your family have experience keeping secrets for and from each other, and how has this affected your relationships?

2. The book switches between the past and present, from before and after Elise?s death, as well as between character perspectives. How did this structure impact your reading experience and your thoughts about each of the characters?

3. What character did you like/connect to the most? What characters did you want to hear more from? **Suggested by Real Fake Book Club (New York, NY)**

4. How did your opinions of each member of the Joseph family change throughout the novel?

5. In what ways were Elise and Marley alike? In what ways were they different? **Suggested by Book Club (Amboy, IL)**

6. The author often writes about strong women, forgiveness and loyalty in her work. Discuss how each character relates to these themes and what role the theme plays in their character development.

7. How does the novel?s setting play a role in the story?

8. Mick plans to take the truth behind Elise?s death to his grave. Do you think Mick played a role in Elise?s death?

9. At the end of the novel, the author reveals how Elise and Mick met and the early years of their marriage. Why do you think the author chose to include this chapter? Did this chapter change your feelings about Elise and Mick?

10. What do you think happens to the Joseph family after the book ends?

11. Each of the Joseph sons play a significant role in keeping their family together: Baylor the strong one, Waylon the responsible one, and Shay the baby. Marley also plays the roles of wife, mother and the one that got away to the Joseph brothers. By the end of the book, do you think Marley and the Josephs still play their respective roles, or have their roles changed?

Author Bio

Amy Jo Burns is the author of the memoir CINDERLAND and three novels: SHINER, which was a Barnes & Noble Discover Pick and an NPR Best Book of the Year; MERCURY, a Barnes & Noble Book Club pick, a Book of the Month pick, a *People Magazine* Book of the Week, and an Editor?s Choice selection in *The New York Times*; and WAIT FOR ME.

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