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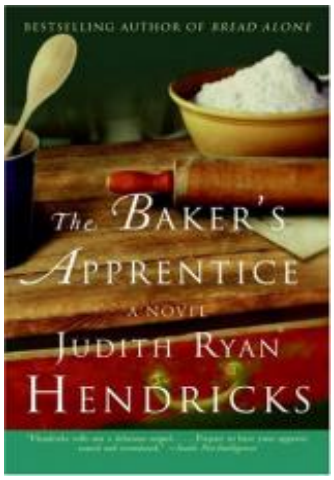
The Baker's Apprentice

by Judith Ryan Hendricks



About the Book

Judith Ryan Hendricks, who *Booklist* has said "calls to mind Barbara Kingsolver in her affinity for wise women and the power of close female friendships," continues the saga of the Queen Street Bakery in **The Baker's Apprentice**.

Wynter Morrison -- first introduced in the bestselling **Bread Alone** -- has found contentment in a life very different from anything she ever imagined: making bread on the night shift, learning the fine points of running a bakery, and exploring the possibilities of a relationship with Mac, her on-again, off-again love interest.

But Mac's failure to deal with issues in his past creates friction, Wyn's soon-to-be-ex husband is turning their divorce into guerrilla warfare, and she is reminded of how quickly life can reverse direction without warning.

Mac's abrupt departure is a shock, but conflicts at the bakery and her friend Tyler's tragic loss afford Wyn little time for brooding. Then letters from Mac begin to arrive, casual and distant at first, but gradually becoming more personal and revealing.

In his absence, Wyn finds she not only learns more about Mac but also about herself, as she becomes Tyler's mentor, passing on the wisdom and healing power of bread making. Her new self-awareness and resiliency will be tested when the Queen Street Bakery's existence is threatened, as well as when Mac returns and she must decide whether there is still a place for him in her life.

From critically acclaimed author Judith Ryan Hendricks comes the next chapter of the Queen Street Bakery, where questions are answered and old friends are revisited.

Discussion Guide

1. The dictionary defines apprentice as one who learns by practical experience, a beginner, a learner. The word has as its root the Latin verb apprehendere, meaning to grasp or seize. How does this relate to the story and to whom does it apply?

2. Maggie is both abrasive and pathetic. How does she affect the other women at the bakery? What makes her different from Tyler, who can also be abrasive and pathetic?

3. Mac finds an escape in music. What do some of the other characters use to block unpleasant realities?

4. Wyn takes a kind of perverse pride in being different from her mother. But do they share any traits? Are their any parallels in their lives?

5. Wyn likes to believe that the crossed wires in her relationship with Mac are all due to his inability to communicate, but are there times when she is less than forthcoming about her thoughts or feelings? How has a disastrous first marriage shaped her attitudes and perceptions?

6. As one thing after another goes wrong for Mac, he resurrects his old dream of escaping to Alaska. How would the story's outcome have been different if he'd gotten there?

7. The people that he meets in Beaverton, Y.T., are an odd collection of souls who all seem to have secrets in their past. How do they impact his struggle to come to terms with his own history?

8. In her senior class, Tyler would have been voted most likely to ... ?

9. Wyn isn't particularly family oriented. What is it about Tyler that gets to her?

10. Two themes of **The Baker's Apprentice** -- bread as a metaphor for life and reconciliation with the past -- were also dealt with in Bread Alone. Compare the ways that these themes (or others) play out in both books.

Author Bio

I was born in Silicon Valley when it was known as the Santa Clara Valley, or, more poetically, the Valley of Heart?s Delight, because it was a lovely, bucolic place known for its orchards and sleepy small towns. Which means if you have any mathematical ability at all, you can figure out that I?m older than I act.

I had a boringly happy childhood in a middle-class suburban family with my parents, who recently celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary, and my younger brother. My mother instilled in me a love of reading, and I branched out from there into writing, although it took me a while to get serious about it.

The first thing I remember writing, when I was about 7 years old, was a story about a family whose Christmas tree went missing. That was followed by a few plays coauthored with my best friend, Lynn Davis, and performed in her garage to a captive audience of intimidated younger kids. The plays were mostly outer space/cowboy stories?don?t ask. In junior high it was gothic romance thrillers, and high school was given over to bad poetry about the varsity basketball team.

I graduated from James Monroe High School in Sepulveda, CA, and went on to a checkered college career

encompassing many schools and numerous changes of major. When I graduated with a degree in journalism from Georgia State University, I immediately began to drift from one job to another?journalist, substitute teacher, public relations specialist for the phone company and a public television station, advertising copywriter, airline computer instructor, and travel agent.

Then, fortuitously, I landed at the McGraw Street Bakery in Seattle, WA, where I fell in love with the rhythms of baking. From that experience came**Bread Alone**, published in the U.S. in 2001. **Isabel's Daughter** (June 2003) grew out of my love for and fascination with the Southwest. **The Baker's Apprentice** (April 2005) is a sequel to **Bread Alone** , and my new book, **The Laws of Harmony** is due out in February 2009.

Because I was raised to be modest, I?m too shy to say, ?My novels have been translated into 11 languages and distributed in more than 15 countries worldwide.? So I let my husband, Geoff, type that part in.

We now live in Santa Fe, NM, with Blue, who is half corgi, half blue heeler, all comedian. When I?m not laughing at her, I?m baking bread or working on my fifth book.

Critical Praise

"[An] engagnig sequel... a fulfilling and happy reading experience."

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