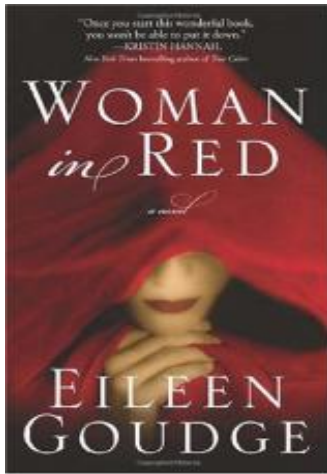


# Woman in Red

by Eileen Goudge

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## About the Book

Alice Kessler spent nine years in prison for the attempted murder of the drunk driver who killed her young son. Now she's returned home to Gray's Island, WA, to reconnect with the Jeremy, son she left behind, who is now a sullen teenager. When Jeremy is wrongly accused of rape, mother and son are thrown together in a desperate attempt to prove his innocence. She is aided by Colin McGinty, a recovering alcoholic and 9/11 widower, who returns to the island in the aftermath of his grandfather's death. Colin's grandfather, a famous artist, is best known for his haunting portrait, 'Woman in Red,' which happens to be of Alice's grandmother.

In a tale that weaves the past with the present, we come to know the story behind the portrait, of the forbidden wartime romance between William McGinty and Eleanor Styles, and the deadly secret that bound them more tightly than even their love for each other. A half century later, that secret is about to be unburied, as Alice and Colin are drawn into a fragile romance of their own, and the ghost of an enemy from long ago surfaces.

## Discussion Guide

1. The difficulties Colin McGinty and Alice Kessler experienced sprang from mistakes made by their grandparents, William McGinty, the artist, and Eleanor Styles, with whom he fell tragically in love. What were these mistakes, and what did you think of the choices they ultimately made about their love for one another?
2. In Eleanor's time, when a woman got pregnant out of wedlock, there were few socially acceptable options available to her. What different decisions or actions might Eleanor have made or taken if she had lived in today's world and this had happened? What changes have occurred in people's attitudes and in the laws that have changed the social landscape?
3. In the author's story, what role did the border collies play in connecting the present to the past?

4. Similarly, what function did the establishment and growth of Colin's oyster beds serve as a story-telling device?
5. How do you think you would react if, like Alice, you had witnessed your son's death at the hands of a negligent driver? Who suffered the most from this tragic accident? Alice; Lowell White; Alice's other son, Jeremy, or Alice's husband, Randy?
6. Colin commented in the story that he'd always heard that great art was born of great suffering. How did the author demonstrate this in **Woman in Red**? What did you think of the ultimate destiny of the portrait?
7. Ultimately, **Woman in Red** is about second chances. What characters in the story had second chances? Which characters made good choices the second time, and which ones didn't? In your own life, have you experienced any second chances, and, if so, how wise were you in your second choices?
8. When Colin sells his grandfather's beloved painting of Eleanor, how is it a gift to William? What did the sale bring to his grandfather that had eluded him in life?
9. In reading **Woman in Red**, what do you think you learned about the author's values? What is important to her? What makes her angry? With what is she impatient, and what does she respect?
10. If you were to write a sequel to **Woman in Red**, what characters would you feature? What do you think these characters would pursue? What would their challenges be? Who would work against them, and who would help them?

## Author Bio

Eileen Goudge (b. 1950) is one of the nation's most successful authors of women's fiction, beginning with the acclaimed six-million-copy bestseller **Garden of Lies**.

Goudge is one of six children, and the joys and strife that come with a large family have informed her fiction, much of which centers on issues of sisterhood and family. At eighteen she quit college to get married, a whirlwind experience that two years later left her divorced, broke, and responsible for her first child. It was then that she started writing in earnest.

On a typewriter borrowed from a neighbor, Goudge began turning out short stories and articles. For years she had limited success --- selling work to *McCall's*, *Reader's Digest*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle* --- but in the early eighties she took a job writing for a new young adult series that would become the phenomenally successful *Sweet Valley High*.

Goudge moved her family from California to New York City, where she spent several years writing young-adult fiction, creating series such as *Seniors*, *Swept Away*, and *Who Killed Peggy Sue*? In 1986 she published her first novel of adult fiction, **Garden of Lies**, inspired by a childhood anxiety that, because she did not resemble her brothers and sisters, she had been secretly adopted --- a suspicion so strong that, at twelve, Goudge broke into her father's lockbox expecting to find adoption papers. (She did not.) The tale of children swapped at birth was a national sensation, spent sixteen weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and eventually yielded a sequel, **Thorns of Truth** (1998), which Goudge wrote in

response to a decade of fan mail demanding she resolve the story.

Since then, Goudge has continued writing women's fiction, producing a total of thirteen novels to date. Her most popular works include the three-book saga of Carson Springs --- **Stranger in Paradise** (2001), **Taste of Honey**(2002), and **Wish Come True** (2003) --- a small, secret-ridden town that Goudge based on scenic Ojai, California. She has also published a cookbook, **Something Warm from the Oven**, which contains recipes that Goudge developed as a reprieve from the stresses of writing novels.

Goudge met her current husband while conducting an interview over the telephone. Entertainment reporter Sandy Kenyon was so taken with the author that he asked if he could call her back when the interview was done, and after weeks of late-night conversations they met in person and were married in 1996.

Goudge lives with Kenyon in New York City.

## Critical Praise

Fast paced, intricately plotted, and multi-layered, **Woman in Red** is a compelling novel about loss, loyalty, love, and the high price of redemption. Eileen Goudge has created a fascinating character in Alice, a woman striving to undo the harm she's done in the past and to reconnect with the family she's left behind. Once you start this wonderful book, you won't be able to put it down.

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