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When a young mother dies under mysterious circumstances, those she leaves behind begin looking for answers in the past—and find a long-buried secret they could have never imagined.

Thirty-six-year-old Grace McAllister never longed for children. But when she meets Victor Hansen, a handsome, charismatic divorced restaurateur who is father to Max and Ava, Grace decides that, for the right man, she could learn to be an excellent part-time stepmom. After all, the kids live with their mother, Kelli. How hard could it be?

At thirteen, Ava Hansen is mature beyond her years. Since her parents' divorce, she has been the one taking care of her emotionally unstable mother and her little brother—she pays the bills, does the laundry, and never complains because she loves her mama more than anyone. And while her father's new girlfriend is nice enough, Ava still holds out hope that her parents will get back together and that they'll be a family again.

But only days after Victor and Grace get engaged, Kelli dies suddenly under mysterious circumstances—and soon, Grace and Ava discover there was much more to Kelli's life than either ever knew.

Narrated by Grace and Ava in the present with flashbacks into Kelli's troubled past, *Heart Like Mine* is a poignant and hopeful portrait about womanhood, love, and the challenges of family life.

Heart Like Mine Details

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Author : Amy Hatvany

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From Reader Review Heart Like Mine for online ebook

Anita says

I took a peek and read chapter 1...oh good gracious I'm going to love this book. Must hurry and finish current read!!

Sheree says

Heart Like Mine is Amy Hatvany doing what she does best ... giving heartfelt insight into very real family issues and dynamics; you know these people, you really do.

Knowing the pain of uncovered secrets after my own mother's death and as a part-time 'stepmother' to an 11 year old I can honestly say Amy writes with a clarity and depth of understanding that makes your heart hurt but also lift.

Grace is engaged to Victor, divorced father of two children, Ava and Max. 13 year old Ava has for years shouldered the burden of her mother, Kelli's emotional instability. It's through Grace and Ava's eyes and flashbacks to Kelli's troubled past that we view a family turned inside out by grief, shifting loyalties and altered expectations. Heart Like Mine cuts to the emotional heart of family bonds, sharing the joys, trials and tears of parenthood, divorce and death with honesty and compassion.

For me, Heart Like Mine wasn't quite as strong as Best Kept Secret or Outside the Lines but it's still all sorts of wonderful. Amy's books are on my auto-buy list and I can't wait to live whatever she writes next.

Janet says

I really enjoyed this book till the end. I was not satisfied with how it ended.

I really liked that we heard this story from 3 different people. Victor's ex wife, his daughter and the current women in his life. (don't want to give too much away here)

We start the story with Victor and Kelli already divorced and Victor dating. Their 2 children live with Kelli and as we read the chapter we learn a lot about Kelli's childhood, her marriage.

There are not a lot of extra characters in this book - a few 'best friends' make small appearances.

Erin says

This was the first book by author, Amy Hatvany, that I read. I was immediately taken in by the characters and found myself not wanting to put the book down. Such an enjoyable read that I am now beginning to read another book by the same author.

Lisa B. says

This was very good. I liked the way the story unfolded from the perspective of the three females - Ava, Kelli and Grace. From Kelli's point of view, we learn about her growing up years, her search for love and acceptance in all the wrong places, and a fateful decision made by her parents that would ultimately devastate her. From Ava, we get to see the struggles of a young girl who tries to be an adult for her struggling Mom and her battle with trying to decide if she should like Grace or not. And finally, from Grace, we see her work through the issues of having being a career woman who falls in love with a man who suddenly has full time responsibility for his children.

Ms. Hatvany did an outstanding job of weaving all these different viewpoints together into a nicely told tale. This is a new author for me and I will definitely be checking out her other books.

I thank Washington Square Press and Netgalley for allowing me to read this in exchange for an unbiased review.

T. Greenwood says

It seems like every time I pick up one of Amy's books, I am reluctant to put it down without finishing, and there are few books I can say this about. I think this is due to a magical combination of readability (though certainly not sacrificing complexity of character) and Amy's tremendous empathy for the people who live within her pages.

Grace has never wanted children. But when she meets Victor (who has two children of his own), she reluctantly accepts the position of part-time step-mother. However, when Victor's ex dies suddenly and mysteriously, she is thrust into the very role she never wanted to fill.

The novel is told in alternating chapters between Grace, Ava (Victor's 13 year old daughter), and Kelli (the ex). There's a nice mystery at the heart of the story which keeps the pages turning. I found myself sympathetic to all three characters due to the sensitivity with which they were treated by their author.

Really looking forward to her next one as well (there's a sneak peek at the back of this book).

Naomi says

Read my full review: <http://bit.ly/YEbbKM>

My opinion: I must admit that I became a huge fan of Amy Hatvany after reading her powerful novel Best Kept Secrets. Ms. Hatvany has a real talent for getting into the minds of her characters and offering her readers a voyeuristic view into their challenges and pains. This is clearly evident in Heart Like Mine. On that note, I must state that her story paths are pretty clear. Don't be expecting mysteries or gotcha moments. Do be expecting gut wrenching incidents or choices that lead to the characters growth or their demise. I have yet

to walk away from the last three novels from Ms. Hatvany where I haven't been holding my breath or been deeply invested in the main character.

This book is told in first person point of view from 3 different characters which I tended to find annoying, but I was able to get through it with paying very close attention to who was "speaking".

On a side note, I have seen Ms. Hatvany compared to several contemporary women's fiction writers, particularly one in particular that irks me every time I see it. I find this to be incredibly unfair to Ms. Hatvany. Not a single one of her books is formulaic in its' presentation nor has she come in with any sort of agenda in writing them.

Jessica says

If you hover over the second star in the ratings system, it says "it was ok." That pretty much sums up my feelings on this one. It was ok -- not bad -- but I didn't find myself truly enjoying it.

Grace is a thirtysomething nonprofit director who has chosen to focus on her career instead of pursuing marriage and motherhood. Things change when she meets a divorced restaurateur named Victor. She falls for him, but isn't quite sure how his two children, Max and Ava, will fit into her life plan. When the kids' mother, Kelli, dies suddenly and unexpectedly, Grace finds herself in a role she never envisioned for herself: full-time stepmother.

The book is told from a rotating POV, as Grace and Ava share narrative duties with an omniscient narrator giving insight into Kelli's troubled past. The writing was fine, but the characters never rose above a single dimension for me and I found Ava's voice to be pretty inauthentic. The marketing copy describes her as mature beyond her thirteen years, but I didn't get that from the book itself as her actions were often childish. I felt like Hatvany didn't get that a mature adolescent's voice is still not going to sound like an adult voice.

Still, it raised some interesting questions and ended up a little less schmaltsy than I feared after the first 100 pages.

Kristy Cabrera says

Quick and easy read - the plot moves along from the beginning, as told from the voices of the three female leads in the story: Grace, newly engaged to her fiance Victor; Ava, Victor's daughter from his first marriage; and Kelli, Victor's ex-wife.

Although I do think the author presents some very realistic portrayals of close female friendships, the challenges of being a divorced and/or blended family, and the ways we try not to turn into our parents as adults, I was not in love with her writing style. In the parts of the book where she does manage to "show not tell," the emotional resonance was far stronger.

Liked this but did not love it.

Nancy says

This is the second book I've read by this author and have been extremely pleased by her writing. I enjoyed the story, loved the way she got into the characters' heads, and the development of each character and the story. Hatvany writes about difficult situations and brings the complex questions to light without dismissing any of them with trite answers or shallow characterizations.

In this book, Grace is engaged to Victor, a divorced father of two children. His ex-wife is Kellie, a thin, beautiful, but clearly insecure woman who suddenly dies in her bed after getting the children off to school. Grace never planned on becoming a mother. She was secure with her relationship with Victor but always knew that Kellie would be the children's mother. The title comes from Grace's thoughts and insecurities of taking on the maternal role in her soon-to-be husband's children's life. Can she be a mother figure with a heart like hers?

Grace did not come easily to the decision to not have children. There is a history and a childhood that negated mothering for her in adulthood. She mothered her baby brother due to circumstances out of her control. She went to college, built a successful career doing work with battered women to restore their integrity and independence, and she's perfectly happy doing life with a career and a husband.

The questions are slowly hashed out. How did Kellie die? Why was Kellie so unhappy? What was her secret? Why was she without family? How will Grace handle having the children full time? How will the children handle their grief? What secrets are keeping Kellie captive even in her death? There are many more but these are the elements closest to my recall. The book is told in three voices; Grace, Kellie, and Ava, Kellie's and Victor's 14 year old daughter. I found the choice of voices to be very balancing as they would each of very different preconceptions.

It would have been easy to write Ava as a cliché teenager. Yes, there is a little bit of screaming, "You're not my mom!" but that is to be expected. Ava is surprisingly complex. She isn't always resentful of Grace and Grace's presence. She also realizes she has other feelings than grief and resentment for Grace. I found her character to be the most enlightening, actually. A teenage girl is very complex. Especially one teetering on the edge of so many brinks. It takes a lot of talent to tackle Ava and keep her cohesive yet deep.

Grace might have been an easy characterization, too. Suddenly, the life she planned with Victor is not what she hoped. She tackles the many stumbling blocks many mothers run into throughout their lives with the added element of the fact that she and Victor are not even married, yet. How does a woman step into a step parental role? Especially one who didn't plan on doing so? How does a mother balance and/or fit her career in a life with children? When and how do a couple find time and energy to connect? How does a parent (or fiancé of a single parent) handle the splitting done by a child (using one against the other)? It is not as exhausting as it sounds. I mean the book. Not real life. The author does an excellent job of representing this aspect.

Last we have Kellie. She is a complete mystery in the beginning. There is a question of possible suicide which is eventually resolved. Again, Kellie's character could have been easily written by sticking to previous scripts written about ex-wives who undermine their ex-husband's lives. This is not the case. Kellie is the most complex of all; growing up in a religious home with older parents who are unforgiving, sinning and being estranged, compensating and reinventing herself. Kellie creates a home for her children that, to their detriment or growth, is representative of what she craved as a child from her parents.

Hatvany remains one of my favorite authors.

Peter Giorno says

I won my copy of *Heart Like Mine* from Goodreads.com, and it's a brilliant, realistic story that touches the lives of so many people. An emotional, heartfelt book full of depth and understanding that should be read by everyone. Amy Hatvany is a brilliant storyteller, and I look forward to reading more of her future books.

Judy Collins says

Wow! Amy Hatvany has just been added to my favorite author list! I love her writing style and cannot wait to start on her other books (I have ordered them all) and will pre-order her new one "Safe with Me – coming 2014 included as a sneak peak at the end of **Heart Like Mine** (already has me hooked).

I am so thankful you wrote this book – I could so relate with Grace, as I was in the stepmother role (and it is not an easy task) – it makes you want to run back to your independent life without all the drama. I had two sons of my own and met a man with 3 sons – his all had dyslexia (all five boys from age 7-15) – boy, do you have to be thick-skinned – there is always some sort of fighting, manipulating, other mother involved, power struggles, etc...and then to find they all want to come and live with you – it can be very overwhelming at times. It means a lot to have the husband's support, sometimes Victor was not supporting Grace (so admire her for hanging in there).

Both Grace and Kelli had similar backgrounds and was unable to live their childhood/teen years as a normal teen; however, Kelli and Grace turned out differently. Kelli was very weak and needy and looked to others to provide her happiness instead of creating her own.

Amy does an outstanding job of speaking from Ava, Kelli, and Grace's perspective and voice-- loved how she seamlessly tied it all together. It was brilliantly written (wish list) – Would love to see a sequel in tracking down Kelli's child, the new relationship between sisters and brothers, and possibly Grace/Victor with a child of their own, and more from Spencer/Melody – (this could fill at least another two books). Hey, I would buy them!

Highly recommend this book and so look forward to reading more from this author. Her insight into the pitfalls of step-parenting is so realistic, as I speak from experience.

I tend to read the new ones first which hooks me on the author, and then I want to dive into everything they have written. Have read so many great reviews about Amy and lots of praise from my other favorite authors about her work. Great reading!! *She speaks to the heart and does not miss a beat.*

Carrie says

****First of all I would like to say this was an uncorrected ARC via Netgalley, *Heart Like Mine* comes out March 19th, 2013.****

Nobody is perfect, we all have our stories to tell, some are more tragic than the others. Things happen, it can break you or make you stronger. Time doesn't make the hurt go away, doesn't make you forget, it's these moments that decide how you are going to live.

Heart Like Mine is told from the pov of Grace and Ava. With Kelli's story being told weaved in between. Amy Hatvany has written such an emotional story, the reader will have no trouble connecting to at least one of the characters. Grace a woman who never wanted to be a mom, Ava a young girl who's is forced to grow up way too fast, and Kelli who just wanted to be loved and motherhood is all she has.

I have to be honest, I know I'm probably in the minority when I say this but didn't really like Grace when this book started, actually I didn't really like her through out most of the story. When she did start to grow on me she would just take two steps back and I would go back to not liking her. I couldn't connect with her character, she seemed selfish at times. Even though the thoughts she has are probably normal ones for someone going through everything that had happened. Nearing the end and also when I sat and thought back over it all, I think I could finally say, 'okay she's not that bad.'

Ava has been through so much at such a young age, having help her emotional mother (Kelli) with her little brother Max and other things around the house, like paying the bills. Her parents divorce and her fathers girlfriend, Grace. And now facing her mothers death and wondering if she really knew her at all. I think I could connect with her a little more, I found her actions to be understandable, she's a thirteen year old who's whole world has been turned upside down and ripped apart.

Kelli, your story ended much too soon, my heart broke for you.

The ending for me is the main thing about this book I didn't like. I wanted more of Kelli's story, I wanted to see it played out to the end. It felt rushed and just tossed in to be finished and done with. So now I'm left with unanswered questions.

So many emotions surged through me while reading this book. The amount of times I cried, I wouldn't be able to tell you. My heart broke over and over again for Kelli, for Ava and Max, for them all. Then at other times I felt pure hate, this hate directed at Kelli's parents. All I can say is, I hate you.

Erin says

Truth be told I wasn't sure I even wanted to read Amy Hatvany's *Heart Like Mine*. I had nothing against the author or her work, I just wasn't entirely convinced I was ready to take something like this on. You see I've

spent the better part of three decades as a member of a blended family, though I can't say my situation bears much resemblance to the Hansens. Now I know I shouldn't be making a review about me, but it would be impossible to understand where I'm coming from without this background information. That being said I promise, the rest of this review is about the book.

The thing that struck me most about this piece was how realistic Hatvany was in her narrative. Ava's divided loyalties, Kellie's natural curiosity about the woman in her ex-husband's life, Victor's difficulty balancing his personal relationships as well as Grace's feelings of inadequacy, frustration and deep-seated desire for acceptance; anyone who has been a part of a blended family recognizes these hallmarks. Hatvany's ability to convey these complicated emotions without coming off melodramatic speaks not only to her gift for storytelling, but also her understanding of how difficult and complex these situations can be for everyone involved.

Another thing I want to highlight is Hatvany's refusal to make anyone "the bitch" in her story. Kellie and Grace are both people. Nothing more, nothing less. Both sympathetic, both flawed, both struggling. They aren't friends, but neither are they enemies. There is a natural tendency to take sides, to perpetuate the stereotypes and I get that, but it doesn't make it healthy or right. We need more stories like this. Stories about people, regular people who are trying to do their best in a situation in which there is no guidebook.

Yes, the situation presented by Kellie's death and the revelations about her past create a unique twist and I do not mean to disregard it, but I really feel it takes a secondary role to the concept of family that is presented within these pages. The need for communication, patience, perspective and most of all, respect in all situations. It is a valuable message, one I am happy to have discovered in a work of fiction.

Shannon L. Gonzalez says

Heart Like Mine is an emotional hill and valley tale. The differences in generations of family and their approach to demonstrating love leads to betrayal, shame and injured pride. This heart wrenching tale showcases the effects of wanting to be loved, wanting acceptance and the pitfalls that dysfunctional families unknowingly put on each other. With children acting the roles of adults and vice versa, a teenage secret continues to haunt this family from one fateful night beginning the betrayal. Tough love, looking for love in the wrong places, unconditional love, lasting love, abusive love are all touched in the theme of this story mixed into a combination of fear, disinheritance, emotional baggage, divorce and self doubt. A cocktail waiting to knock the characters to their knees. In the end the secret is revealed leading to a modicum of understanding. The reader is left with the promise that a search for a reconciliation might happen as a family comes together, healing from the grieving process of loss of different degrees. Heart Like Mine is a study on familial love and all that it encompasses.
