



A Matter of Mercy

Lynne Hugo

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Caroline Marcum thought she'd escaped the great mistake of her life by leaving Wellfleet harbor, but is forced to face it when she returns, reluctantly, to care for her dying mother. Ridley Neal put his past-and his prison term-behind him to return home to take over his father's oyster and clam beds. Casual acquaintances long ago, when a nor'easter hits the coast, Rid and Caroline's lives intersect once again. When Rid and two other sea farmers are sued by the wealthy owners of vacation homes who want to shut them down, and Caroline accidentally meets the person she most wronged, they each must learn to trust-and love. Inspired by an actual lawsuit, *A Matter of Mercy* is a riveting novel about treasuring the traditional way of life in the shallows of beautiful Cape Cod bay by discovering where forgiveness ends. And where it begins.

A Matter of Mercy Details

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From Reader Review A Matter of Mercy for online ebook

Sue says

3.5. I enjoyed learning about aquaculture off of Cape Cod and appreciate the research that went into it's history and techniques. It was also interesting that the lawsuit brought against the locals working in the oyster beds was reality based. As for the storyline and characters it was predictable and nothing to rave about.

Felicity Gibson says

A Matter of Mercy

By Lynne Hugo

Read 29th June 2014

“The sun slid below the horizon degree by degree, a great red neon ball being lowered from an invisible string held by God, fiery and benign.”

An unusual setting- slow paced, suited to the cycle of aquaculture and the traditions of a society. Her mother dying is the catalyst to this story. Starting in grief, the story moves through great tension right to the very end. The imagery is like embroidery, weaving its magic; the story is captivating and the reader is drawn into CiCi’s life. We care about her. A deeply emotional story, with well drawn characters.

I award it 4 stars.

Floyd says

Some fiction books are just that; but some fictional tales also include enough facts and history to add to the readers collected knowledge in unexpected ways. Such was the case of this wonderful seaside legal drama.

I was not attracted to the book because of its seaside environment. Neither did the legal case which forms its foundation draw me in - at least at first. As a Christian, I have heard about mercy, but this book is not a Christian drama. In the end, I learned more about mercy, I also learned about a regional culture located in and around Cape Cod, MA. Aquaculture, the growing and harvesting of shellfish, serves as the major industry off of the southern tip of Massachusetts.

Caroline (CiCi) Marcum moves back into her Cape Cod home to care for her ailing mother after spending a number of years in jail for an accident that led to the death of a young child. She had lost her teaching certificate in the process and her future was uncertain. She found herself unexpectedly drawn to one of the aquaculturists who worked the grants along Cape Cod harvesting clams and oysters. Ridley (aka Rid) Neal’s past was also checkered - with time spent in jail for some youthful indiscretions that continued to shadow his life.

As the fall harvesting season comes to an end, Rid finds himself one of three aquaculturists being sued

because their work obstructed the view of the bay for the “washashores” that return to Cape Cod every spring and leave as winter arrives. Woven into this work of fiction, the lawsuit is based on an actual case which made its way through the courts in 1996.

As the book seeks to resolve the relationships and the legal issues involved around the lawsuit, the reader learns much about the people who supply the world’s best oysters and clams. The shellfish which are harvested from Cape Cod are not only known locally, but are shipped around the world to the best restaurants located in such locales as London and Paris. I find that the best fiction will make me want to explore - by finding maps, historical milestones, etc. As I read this week, I found myself exploring Google for details about the culture and history of Cape Cod and its aquacultural industry.

Though fiction, *A Matter of Mercy* contributed to my education. My hope is that others will enjoy this book, as I did, for the picture of mercy it presented and the glimpse of culture and history to which I had not previously been exposed.

This review is based on a free electronic copy provided by the publisher for the purpose of creating this review. The opinions expressed are my own.

Susan Kaplan says

I read an advance galley of *A Matter of Mercy* by Lynne Hugo. I could not put down this book. *A Matter of Mercy* is the story of Catherine Marcum, a native of Wellfleet, who returns to be with her dying mother. Several years earlier, Catherine (CiCi) had killed a child while she was driving while intoxicated, and served four years in jail. As the story unfolds, she reconnects with a number of old friends (and, not friends), gets pregnant, has a series of adventures and misadventures (I can say no more without spoilers), and learns critical lessons about life, love, and loss. This appeals to me because my personal philosophy of life is that without love, one is not really alive, and that with love comes loss, AND, we can survive the loss. A broken heart heals and the memories of the lost love live on.

The characters develop beautifully. They are somewhat two-dimensional at first, which I think is intentional, but with each page, the author draws the reader in to each character, and the character literally comes to life before our eyes. We see Caroline learning to tell her mother how much she loves her, and also telling her when it is time to go. We experience her grief with her. There are characters in *A Matter of Mercy* who have small roles, but they are by no means insignificant, and each one is developed with the same careful building of who they are. The language is beautiful - lyrical, descriptive, resonant, and never trite.

I learned a lot about aquaculture from this book. I learned why Wellfleet oysters are so prized. And I learned enough about the people in this story that I would love to meet them, and I would love to meet Lynne Hugo. This is simply a splendid book.

Erin Clemence says

Special thanks to the author, for allowing me the chance to read this novel.

In Hugo's novel, "A Matter of Mercy", a woman named Caroline is dealing with the death of her mother while readjusting to life in her hometown. When she meets an old friend, Ridley, her life takes an unexpected turn. While Ridley faces legal battles as a result of his job as an oyster fisherman, Caroline comes face-to-face (literally) with a figure from her past. A figure that not only sent Caroline to jail, but also has the power to change her future.

Hugo (the author of "Remember My Beauties" and many others) writes novels that are not only entertaining, but her well-researched plots also provide the opportunity for a reader to learn something. For example, I knew nothing about oyster fishing or raising horses, but both of Hugo's novels that I've read have given me a knowledge base on these topics.

Caroline's story is a sad one, and a reader forms allegiances with her automatically. Ridley, however, is an acquired taste. Initially, he was a despicable jerk of a character and I did not see how he would redeem himself (which, obviously, he inevitably did). The story is told elegantly, through Hugo's descriptive prose, and the plot is rich and well-defined. As I have mentioned, it is evident that Hugo is a well-researched author, who immerses herself in her work and its characters, in order to produce a better novel for her readers.

This was a novel that allowed for what I can a "slow burn"- an opportunity to understand the characters and the background, develop a relationship and form opinions, and then absorb the addictive plot. This is not something that can be done by just anyone, and Hugo (once again) does it wonderfully.

Diane says

Using a real lawsuit from 1996 between wealthy vacation home owners and sea farmers who cultivated oysters and scallops on the outer banks of Cape Cod as a stepping off point, author Lynne Hugo weaves an intriguing story in her terrific novel, *A Matter of Mercy*.

Caroline, known as CiCi to her high school friends, moves back home to Wellfleet, a small fishing community in Cape Cod to care for her dying mother Eleanor. Slowly, we find that something bad happened to Cici, something for which she served time in jail.

Eleanor would like to see CiCi settle down, marry and start a family. She reminds CiCi that Rid, an guy whom CiCi knew in high school, is working as an aquafarmer and looking very good. I love that Eleanor describes him as "built like a brick s@#thouse. Eleanor had abandoned prim language with no explanation after she was widowed." That is a fabulous line, such a great way to establish Eleanor's character in one sentence.

During a bad storm, CiCi runs out to help Rid, and they end up at her home where they have sex. Rid spent some time in prison for a drug charge, so he and CiCi have something in common. The next morning, Rid races out, leaving a confused CiCi.

The aquafarmers, who have owned and worked oyster beds in the water behind the now-ubiquitous McMansions forever, are being sued by the new homeowners, claiming that the farmers are trespassing on their property to harvest their oyster beds.

Some of the farmers believe that CiCi may be involved in the lawsuit, even though the home she inherited is modest in size and scope, and her family has been in Wellfleet forever too. When someone starts stalking

CiCi, trying to scare her and throwing rocks through her window, she becomes afraid.

CiCi accidentally runs into someone she hurt in the past, and she desperately wants to find out how the person is doing, almost to the point of obsession. Does CiCi hope to be forgiven or is this person the stalker?

The characters in the story- CiCi, Rid, Terri the librarian, Elsie (Eleanor's hospice nurse), Billy the bartender- are fascinating and completely realistic. If I ever visited Wellfleet, I believe I would run into them somewhere in the village.

The relationships between the characters are well-drawn too, between Rid and CiCi, Rid and his fellow aquafarmers, with the one between Rid and his faithful dog Lizzie being my favorite.

Hugo's language is beautiful too, with these sentences really moving me:

"And suddenly, she was crying at the too-largeness, the mystery of things, needing to make them small enough to think about, to get her arms around."

"The mercy I can show you is in not asking for your forgiveness."

Hugo manages to beautifully blend a love story with a mystery, with a story about forgiveness, all set in a fascinating place that becomes an important character in the book. My family has vacationed several times in Cape Cod, and so I was particularly interested in reading *A Matter of Mercy*.

She manages to put us in CiCi's shoes, and had me wondering if I would make the same decisions the characters did. I became completely invested in this amazing story, my heart aching for the characters and what they went through. (Bonus: I learned a lot about aquafarming, something I knew nothing about.) I read *A Matter of Mercy* in just two sittings, unable to break away from this emotional, moving story.

Kim says

This was a beautiful book, albeit one that was hard for me to read for reasons that have nothing to do with the quality of the book and everything to do with me. It is the story of Caroline Marcum, who has come home to care for her mother in her final days. There is so much sadness, so much heartache, so much emotion. It tugged at my heart from start to finish, even as the suspense of the mystery underlying Caroline's life unfolded.

The last several years have been less than perfect for Caroline. The pain of it and the pain and guilt she carries with her threatens to overwhelm her, especially when faced with the fact that her mother is dying from cancer. She is emotionally wrought when she runs into an old friend and, in a moment of vulnerability, has a fling. That one moment changes everything for her and, in many ways, makes her feel even more lost and confused and guilty.

This is a story of moments. In a moment with Ridley, her life changes. During a trip to a nearby library, another moment sets in motion a scary series of events in Caroline's life. There is a lesson there, that those small moments can change your life in ways you can't possibly imagine.

The characters are wonderful in this story. Caroline and Rid seem rather flat at the beginning of the story, but I think that this was intentional on the part of the author. It seems to underscore the idea that life without the presence of love is not really living, that with love comes pain and loss, but that we can survive that pain and

loss. Caroline has become so guarded with her emotions over the last several years and she has to learn to be vulnerable again, even to her mother in her dying days. Rid is used to relying on himself and is going through some things that make him distrustful of most everyone outside his immediate circle. Love and trust does not come easy to either of them. As they grow, their characters develop beautifully!

This is a beautiful story set in the midst of the Cape Cod oyster culture. The setting is rich with detail and teaches without feeling like a lesson. I felt like I was on the dunes of the oyster flats, experiencing the area right along with the characters.

Things to love...

- The detailed setting.
- The emotions and growth of the characters.

My Recommendation: I loved the depth of the characters and the depth of the emotions for me as a reader. Parts of Caroline's story were painful for me, in light of my own loss, but it was beautiful nonetheless. I gave it 4.5 mugs!

Judy Collins says

A special thank you to Blank Slate Press, AuthorBuzz, and NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

A heartwarming read, A MATTER OF MERCY is a story of loss, love, trust, forgiveness, redemption, and second chances.

An engaging and complex read about tough choices, and living with a past you wish you could change. Two lost and flawed souls, grieving from their own dark past, connect once again years later (on not so happy terms) in their home town. Each with their own demons and fighting furiously, to stay afloat in the present. Each have more in common than they may think, and share something which will bond them for life.

Inspired by the 1996 lawsuit depicted in the Cape Cod novel, Lynn Hugo, masterfully crafted the history, the people and places, the area, as well as aquaculture in Wellfleet, MA, with sensitivity, and detailed research.

The main character, Caroline (CiCi), has a past, she is guilt ridden, with no desire to return to her hometown of Wellfleet. Her mother Eleanor) is dying with cancer and she is called home from Chicago to spend her final days caring for her mom. Her mom, her mom's friend Noelle and hospice nurse Elsie, want the best for Caroline, as she is alone in the world. She has no friends except her mom's friend and nurse, offering their support.

Ridley (Rid) also has a past, with a prison term behind him and returning home to take over his father's oyster and clam beds. He does not trust easily and he is focused on carrying out his father's legacy-and will not allow anything to get in the way.

However, Rid and two other sea farmers are being sued by wealthy owners of vacation homes who want to shut them down. In the meantime, CiCi and Rid connect briefly, as they knew one another from high school; however, not that close.

CiCi's worst nightmare faces her, as the one person she never wanted to meet again (the one act she lives with daily, her mistake--the person she most wronged), the mother, Terry is here in this town working at the local library.

She withholds her identity to get close to Terry. As the suspense builds, they must learn to put the hurt behind, in order to move on and trust again.

As someone begins to try and run her out of town, terrorizing her, she is afraid for her life and yet she trusts no one. She has no way of knowing if it is about the land, her past, or the one person she is connected to.

A diamond in the rough, Ridley with his truck, his oysters, and a lab named Lizzie, will warm your heart, as his layers are peeled away. He and Caroline (you will sympathize with her), will need to face their fears, take some risks, put their past aside, and learn to forgive themselves and others, in order to experience love and happiness. (Some other mystery, suspense, and surprises, along the journey--no spoilers).

Loved the quote on Page 271: "Listen, I know you're right, there's some risk. But I have to take that chance if I'm going to live at all. I've been afraid to, because so much goes wrong all the time. But not living hurts, too. That's the problem. You love, you hurt. You don't love, you hurt. You trust, you forgive, and you get hurt. You don't trust, you don't forgive, guess what?"

"Which choices let you live the best, most decent life? Which gives you more chance at goodness? The way we live here is all about risk and love, isn't it? That's what sea farmers do. You don't give up. This is my chance to not give up to have a little hope Terry and I can somehow move on to something better in our lives."

A MATTER OF MERCY is a riveting novel about holding strong to history and family, and the land and seas of beautiful Cape Cod, as three people discover redemption and forgiveness.

Beautifully written, this is my first book by Lynn Hugo and look forward to reading more from this talented author!

If you are a fan of authors, Carla Buckley, T. Greenwood, Mary Alice Monroe or Karen White, you will enjoy reading this rich and intimate look of more than sea and the land, the love of family and community, and the lives of those who protect and nurture—those they treasure and hold close.

<http://www.judithdcollinsconsulting.c...>

<http://judithdcollins.booklikes.com/p...>

Ti says

The Short of It:

Mistakes can destroy you or change you for the better, but the choice is yours.

The Rest of It:

One fateful night, while driving under the influence, Caroline Marcum crashes into another car, killing a special needs child. Sent to prison and filled with guilt, she serves her time quietly but once out, leaves her home of Wellfleet Harbor. Her marriage is over and all she can think of is leaving the past behind her. However, when her mother falls terminally ill, she is forced to return to the Cape to face all of the things she's been avoiding for quite a long time.

This story will appeal to lots of readers for many reasons. The story is set in Cape Cod and centers not only around Caroline's story but also the story of the local aquaculturists who make their living farming oysters. As Caroline tends to her mother, she is reacquainted with a friend from school, Ridley Neal who happens to be one of the oyster farmers farming the beach right below her mother's home. There is a little bit of romance, a lot of strife, a touch of mystery and of course, the fascinating tidbits surrounding oyster farming and what it entails. I found these bits especially enjoyable.

What I noticed right away while reading, is how quickly I was pulled into the story. Knowing absolutely nothing about oyster farming, I had no problem picking up the terminology. However, there were two moments where I wasn't sure which direction the author was going in. These two moments did take me out of the narrative a little, but not enough to make me like the book any less. One, involves a law suit against the aquaculturists (which happens to be inspired by a real-life lawsuit) and the other involves stalking and revenge. The latter seemed a little out-of-place to me.

Regardless, I was surprised at how absorbed I was while reading. I had a long stint over the holidays where I was unable to read anything and then here comes this book and I blow though it in just a couple of sittings. The main characters are riddled with flaws, which readers here know, makes my heart sing. The story wasn't predictable, even though a couple of things seemed a little out-of-place and choosing to build a story around oyster farming...well, I've never read anything about oyster farming so that was very different and unique to me. I think I would have liked a little more redemption in the end but overall, I enjoyed the book quite a bit.

For more reviews, visit my blog: Book Chatter.

Nancy Baker says

Mercy is an act of forgiveness. This was a beautiful story of one's woman quest to receive forgiveness for an act committed years ago – an act for which she paid time in prison but has never yet felt exonerated from. A mother goes to remove her disabled and deformed child from the back seat of a car at the same time another car appears coming down the road driven by a women with only a shade too much to drink. A car door opens, a mother and child are struck, a child dies and a world of people suffer unbearable and unstoppable pain.

Caroline has come home to the shoreline to be with her mother as she enters the latter stages of cancer. Selfishly she pleads for her mother to stay with her and, like any unselfish mother would do, the mother clings to life for as long as she can to satisfy her child. It is only when Caroline whispers to her mother that she is pregnant that her mother knows her daughter will not be left alone and she is at peace to take her last breath.

Intertwined in Caroline's story is the life of coastal fisherman – not the kind with poles and nets but those

who raise and nurture oysters and shellfish. The history and detail of their livelihood was fascinating and brought much appreciation for all that is involved to bring oysters on the half shell to your table. Their days are comprised of caging, netting, raking, burying, and other tasks on a daily basis to ensure maturity and growth. They endure the harshest of weather conditions, and like a farmer, much is left to chance when your partner's name is Mother Nature.

This story involves social battles, internal battles and internal healing. There is loss and there is love. There is high tide and there is low tide. In the end we have to hope that life, like the sea, shows some mercy to us all.

Wendy Seeley says

I enjoy reading books that teach me something new. I learned so much about aquaculture and the life of the oysterman. Cape Cod is a lovely area and I have a new perspective on the region and appreciate the desire of its residents to preserve their livelihoods. Hugo's writing style was engaging and descriptive. It was easy for me to visualize just what she was writing about.

Schuyler Wallace says

Lynne Hugo has touched on a subject that greatly interests me. The men that farm the seas, the oyster men, lobster men and clammers, are hard working and dedicated. Their story is not often told but Hugo, on top of being familiar with the outer Cape, has done a great deal of research and it resonates in her novel, "A Matter of Mercy." I enjoyed her detailed look at this world of water and weather and crusty New England water men.

Unfortunately, her story of a woman who exists in a world of crippling self-pity over the accidental killing of a young child while driving under the influence followed by the death of her mother did not resonate with me as realistic. There were numerous sobbing recriminations, wild accusations, misplaced fits of anger and huge jumps to conclusions; too many for me to take the story seriously. Drama, of course, exists in peoples' lives but in this case the theatrics seemed never ending and forced. As a reader trying to wade through page after page of intense tears and emotion, I wanted to holler at everyone to just calm down and try to put some common sense into their decisions. Every character seemed to have a problem that prompted irrational behavior.

There are readers who appreciate a storyline that prompts emotional reaction. Apparently, in my old age, I expect people to keep their emotions in check and have little tolerance for irrational behavior. There are some writers who, through their skillful writing, can prompt my sympathetic acceptance of tragic circumstances. Unfortunately I didn't find that to be the case here. I found the aquaculture and life around Wellfleet, Massachusetts to be interesting and well written, but the personal relationships developed in the story were lacking in realism.

Brenda says

This book I couldn't put down. I couldn't go to bed until I finished it.

A great mystery, love story, amazing descriptions on how to prepare beds for oysters and clams and how the farmers did things with the grants they inherited and worked for years and then left to their sons to carry on. I knew nothing about such things and it was really interesting. The main characters Caroline (Cici) and Ridley (Rid) were very well developed and they didn't have a fascinating love story...they had a one night stand that ended up with CiCi pregnant and not knowing what she wanted to do about it. Ridley didn't know what he wanted to do about it. There was of course a lot of fighting, and arguing as they decided how to work things out.

Caroline was also trying to work things out with a woman who had the misfortune to be opening the door of her car, and pulling her four year old son out of the car as Caroline was driving down the road under the influence. The little boy died. Caroline served time in jail.

She ran into Caroline at the library after she returned to the area to take care of her dying Mother.

Ridley is also all tied up with a man who is suing several of the local men with Grants in front of his home who he wanted to shut down. There were several as you can see subplots or mysterious things going on all at once as Rid and Cici decided how to handle the pregnancy and their life going forward. Great book!

Here is the description as found on Good Reads:

Caroline Marcum thought she'd escaped the great mistake of her life by leaving Wellfleet harbor, but is forced to face it when she returns, reluctantly, to care for her dying mother. Ridley Neal put his past-and his prison term-behind him to return home to take over his father's oyster and clam beds. Casual acquaintances long ago, when a nor'easter hits the coast, Rid and Caroline's lives intersect once again. When Rid and two other sea farmers are sued by the wealthy owners of vacation homes who want to shut them down, and Caroline accidentally meets the person she most wronged, they each must learn to trust-and love. Inspired by an actual lawsuit, *A Matter of Mercy* is a riveting novel about treasuring the traditional way of life in the shallows of beautiful Cape Cod bay by discovering where forgiveness ends. And where it begins.

Mary Brown says

A Matter Of Mercy by Lynn Hugo is a story of loss, forgiveness, love and second chances. It's a story full of emotions and triumphs.

Caroline (CiCi) has returned home to take care of her dying mother. Her mother is worried that Caroline will be all alone when she dies and wishes that Caroline had someone to take care of her and love her.

Rid has also returned home to run the family business after his father passes away. The only thing that Rid has in his life, other than the family oyster business, is his dog, Lizzie. When a lawsuit threatens to take the family business, Rid doesn't know what he will do.

Caroline and Rid knew each other when they were younger but had not seen each other in a long time. Both of them have been to prison and neither's life has been an easy one. During a hurricane-force storm, they are reunited and get extremely close. But only for that short period of time. The night after the storm hits, they each go their separate ways again. With Rid's worry over the lawsuit and Caroline's sadness over her mother's death and dealing with her past problems, can Caroline and Rid get past all of that and shed their

pasts to form a future together?

The writing style flows smoothly and is very descriptive. I felt myself experience the ocean and oyster farming as though I was right there. Emotions were easily felt while reading the book and at times I had tears in my eyes.

The author must have done a lot of research on oyster farming and on the lawsuit that is presented in this book. This book was based on true events and I found I learned a some things about these.

The characters are well developed, well rounded and three dimensional. It is easy to be pulled into their story and care what happens to them.

I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys reading an emotional story about living and second chances. I have not read any other of this authors books, but I will definitely be checking the others out.

I received a free copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for a honest review. I would like to thank NetGalley and Blank Slate Press for the opportunity to read this great book.

Nancy Pinard says

Told with the deft eye and ear of a poet, Lynne Hugo's *A MATTER OF MERCY*, will take you to Wellfleet on Cape Cod in 1996, the year wealthy landowners sued the aquaculturists with inherited rights to farm the oysters and quahogs in Wellfleet Bay because they found their labors unsightly. You will meet Caroline Marcum, whose teaching career was curtailed when her drinking and driving met its worst imagined outcome, and former convict, Ridley Neal, whose livelihood depends on weather, seed stock, the judgment of his partners, and the outcome of the law suit. You will watch their fledgling love beaten by storms of revenge and unforgiveness until each is ready to throw away the little they've managed to keep to preserve the pride that threatens to starve them. Don't miss this riveting story about the things that really matter and the sacrifice it takes to find the road home.
