



Mercy Snow

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In the tiny town of Titan Falls, New Hampshire, the paper mill dictates a quiet, steady rhythm of life. But one day a tragic bus accident sets two families on a course toward destruction, irrevocably altering the lives of everyone in their wake.

June McAllister is the wife of the local mill owner and undisputed first lady in town. But the Snow family, a group of itinerant ne'er-do-wells who live on a decrepit and cursed property, have brought her -- and the town -- nothing but grief.

June will do anything to cover up a dark secret she discovers after the crash, one that threatens to upend her picture-perfect life, even if it means driving the Snow family out of town. But she has never gone up against a force as fierce as the young Mercy Snow. Mercy is determined to protect her rebellious brother, whom the town blames for the accident, despite his innocence. And she has a secret of her own. When an old skeleton is discovered not far from the crash, it beckons Mercy to solve a mystery buried deep within the town's past.

Mercy Snow Details

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From Reader Review Mercy Snow for online ebook

Linda says

The reflective nature of the prose elevates this novel to 5 stars. Characters and setting both come alive and haunt the reader even when not reading. Loved it.

Deborah says

feel I've been on a very fortunate trip having just finished "Mercy Snow." It's one of those books that puts the heart back into reading. I felt such a loss of reading material that excited me over the holidays...and since that time, "Burial Rites" and "Mercy Snow" have both resurrected my belief in good books and fantastic authors. Tiffany Baker, in particular, is a gifted writer whose work is just captivating. I fell in love with her as an author when she wrote "The Gilly Salt Sisters," but I have to say that this book really rivals that one!

This is a haunting and gorgeously written book. There is much to be said about the workings of the characters. Their psychology leaves their outward appearance secondary as we become absorbed in their thought processes and machinations. As June, the mill owner's wife, spins her web catching herself up in it as well as the townswomen, we are reminded of how easy it is to fall in our own folly. We become desperate and hungry with Mercy and Hannah. And, we look with frustration at a situation that is both hateful and unfair from the goldfish bowl of the Gods...far above the action of the novel.

This is a magical and meaningful book. Mystical and mythological bits and pieces dot the storyline reminding us that all that we see in the world may not be all there is to it. It's a story that draws you in and keeps the pages turning. There's more than one moral to this story.

The mystery at the center of the novel keeps dancing at the edges of every chapter, leaving us grasping at it like a willow-the-wisp. While we are given a good deal of the actual mystery at the onset, the deeper ones are withheld from us, and we know it! This gives depth and richness to the storyline.

I loved this book. It was one of those I wished would never end. I could happily have gone on reading about these characters...

This is one of those books you just have to read this winter. It's a show-stopper of a novel. I highly recommend it!

Dale Harcombe says

Four and a half stars

I became thoroughly immersed in the story of the small New Hampshire town of Titan Falls and the characters who inhabited it. A tragic bus accident that sees one young woman dead and the bus driver in a critical condition, starts rumours and suspicion flowing. These largely centre on Zeke Snow but his sister Mercy cannot believe he is responsible. The Snow family are considered losers by most of the tight knit community. Meanwhile June McAllister, wife of the paper mill owner, finds out more than she would rather know about her husband, Cal. How far is she prepared to go to protect the life she has? How far will Mercy go to try and prove Zeke's innocence? Caught like a pawn between them, is Mercy and Zeke's young sister Hannah. Other characters, like Hazel whose husband Fergus was the bus driver, are also caught in the middle of this drama played out in Titan Falls.

I thought this was an interesting comment about attitudes with regard to Hazel's thoughts at one stage about Mercy, 'It wasn't anything the girl did really. It was more all the uncomfortable little truths she made Hazel realize about herself.' We may often feel similarly about others. Also liked this other question raised, 'Where did one person's influence on another ever begin or end?' Food for thought.

Then there are who the healings that happen and seem to be attributable to Mercy Snow. When a skeleton is found on Snow land it only adds to the mysteries in this mill town with its river polluted because of the mill that affects most of the town's inhabitants in one way or another.

I loved the writing in this novel, and the characters. They were so real. This book is about prejudices, class differences, loss, choice, secrets and one that raises thought provoking questions like how far a person will go to protect those they love or how influenced people are by the attitudes and opinions of others. I wasn't thrilled with one event that happened towards the end, only because I loved the character, but thinking about it afterwards conceded that maybe it had to be. My emotions were engaged throughout this book and there were tears as well as anger at times. I would recommend this book as a great read and will look for more by this author.

Ellen Gerstein says

If I had to describe this book in two words, they would be QUIET and POWERFUL. It's the kind of story that stays with you long after you have finished it. It takes place in a New England town that after while you begin to inhabit, thanks to the wonderful prose from author Tiffany Baker. The characters are all deeply flawed, giving weight to the events in the story. Highly recommend.

(I received an advance copy of this book)

Diane S ? says

The Androscoggin River is a real waterway and the paper mills that lined its shore, the people that lived

along its path all tell an important part of history. The author refers to this in her afterword and it served as a reminder to me that history takes many various shapes and forms.

The MacAllister's have owned and run the paper mill for ages, they are town royalty. The mill is in Titan Falls, New Hampshire and most of the people there owe their livelihoods to this family. This novel is the story of an unwinding of a decades old mystery, of a marriage and a family, and of a town and way of life. Secrets always have a way of coming back to haunt those involved and once the secret is known, many find their lives changed. Some for the good, some for the bad, but inevitable all the same.

June McAllister, a young woman whom in the past had married above her station into the McAllister clan, feels that in many ways her husband had saved her from the horrible life she had lead before. She will do anything to protect that, even if a tiny voice says maybe she is wrong.

The Snows are a family that the town considered losers, beneath them, corrupt, no good hangers on. They are a big part of the secret, in the past and the present. Hannah Snow is a youth girl who bones seem to talk to and Mercy Snow, a young woman is wise beyond her years, will do her best at healing the town, as she protects her family.

Well written, wonderful mix of magical realism, very atmospheric with oh so interesting characters and a glimpse into the harm secrets can hold. To bring together or to tear apart. Love the ending as well, not everything ends happily nor should it, no matter how one wishes it could. Will not forget the character of Mercy, her name says much.

Julie says

Listened to this one on audio during my commute. It was really slow-paced in the beginning, and I almost gave up on it. Glad I didn't though, the ending was good, if a bit draggy again. Overall a good story.

Christine says

Titan Falls is a mill town. The livelihoods of almost all the residents depend on the paper mill and the McAllister family has owned it for generations. Cal and his wife June are Titan Falls royalty for whom opinions are not voiced, lips are sealed and secrets are kept ... generations of secrets. Everyone knew the Snows were good for nothing n'er-do-wells so the town breathed a collective sigh of relief when they thought the last of them had died. Soon enough a battered and rusty RV pulls into town carrying Mercy Snow, her brother Zeke and younger sister Hannah who have arrived to lay claim to their family's property. On the heels of their arrival, on a snowy night, the school bus is returning from taking the students on an evening trip to the movies and it is run off the road by an unknown car. Zeke's car is found not too far up the road wrapped around a tree and he is nowhere to be found. To all concerned its quite obvious who should be blamed for the driver's injuries and a young teen's death. But things are rarely as simple as they seem, especially in a town so very good at keeping grudges and even better at keeping secrets.

I was quite excited to see another book by Ms. Baker as I enjoyed "The Gilly Salt Sisters" and "The Little Giant of Aberdeen County" so much. Her books always have a folksy, almost fairy tale, feel to them that I find appealing. This one is no exception. It has its share of mysticism, folk tales and remedies and people

who are good at the core yet find themselves in difficult situations because of preconceived notions. Her good characters are never completely good, as her bad characters are never completely bad and the worst mess usually happens through good intentions.

Ms. Baker never fails to draw me in to both the story and the setting with her writing. I would not hesitate to recommend this book and am looking forward to another from her soon.

Linda says

This was my first encounter with a Tiffany Baker book. I really enjoy novels set in New England and this one didn't disappoint. Regionally, individuals are true to themselves, and at the same time, they absorb a certain persona from the "speak" and the ways of their surroundings.

"It had been twenty-odd years since June had stood in the dizzying swirl of being two people at once, the one you let people see and the one you kept buttoned close to your chest."

And that is the fine thread that weaves through Mercy Snow. Like Eleanor Rigby from the Beatles' tune of "the face that she kept in a jar by the door" so go the characters of this book. Tiffany Baker introduces us to life in the small New Hampshire town of Titan Falls where lives are controlled and affected by the paper mill industry. Are the characters' destinies determined by their happenstance in life or more affected by their choices? And what exactly triggers the inclination toward a particular fork in the road?

The female characters are showcased a step above their male counterparts. I was particularly intrigued with the character of Hazel who seemed to stay true to herself and to her commitments, and yet, she stretched across the page with growth and reinvention. I'd love for Ms. Baker to bring about a story seen through the eyes of Hazel....a woman's questionable past overlaid with footprints reaching towards a higher plane of existence.

I definitely will be checking out previous books by Tiffany Baker and looking forward to future offerings.

Donna says

I liked this story. I liked the characters. They were all trapped in their own class and they were terrified of change or of anything new that swam against the norm. For a small town, some suffered from the 'me and mine first' mentality. But it was balanced out by others who had a different outlook. Overall, I enjoyed this.

Sandy *The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice* says

This is a book about what it is like to live on the wrong side of the tracks in a small town where one family, the mill owners, rule the roost.

It is probably a very good social commentary, but that is not what I was looking for when I picked this book to listen to.

A tragic bus accident is blamed on Zeke Snow, one of the family group living in poverty on the outskirts of town. It is quickly apparent who is actually to blame for the accident, and a lot of time is spent on how it is covered up. The characters are all very black and white. In this case rich equals bad, and poor equals good. I would have preferred that people were a little more multi-faceted. It would have provided me with a far more satisfying read.

Jeannine says

Story about the fallout from a suspicious bus accident in a paper mill town in the northeast. The main character in this book is the town and the "culture" of living in a town dominated by a paper mill. The author goes on endlessly and repetitively about the family who owns the paper mill, the no good Snow family, and devotes too much ink to describing the murky river polluted by the mill and how murky it is, and oh, have we mentioned how polluted it is? (We get it. Move on).

I made it through about 80 pages or so. I felt the characters were stereotypes/cliches. The sweet Mercy Snow (misunderstood, victim of her no-good family), the son of the mill owner (sweet, misunderstood, doesn't want to follow in the family business as is expected), the wife of the paper mill owner (cold-hearted, focusing on appearances, and yes, misunderstood), and the paper mill owner (mean, suspicious, underhanded), the old batty lady who raises sheep and sees Mercy's heart of gold. Blah blah blah.

I was interested in reading a novel set in a paper mill town as I work in a town founded around a paper mill (said mill still in existence) and while I'm not originally from this area and don't work in the paper mill, I found a lot of the description and "culture" presented here to be over-dramatized and cliched.

Terri says

A lot of readers seemed to really like this book, but I wasn't one. The characters had no depth or subtlety; the homespun vernacular used in both the dialogue and much of the POV exposition seemed unrealistic and overdone; and the rampant symbolism was as murky as the river running through the center of the story. Though I believe the time period of most of the action was meant to be about the mid-nineties, the old-fashioned scenes and settings seemed more like pre-WW2. Odd! Most egregious of all, the one character who so needed a comeuppance for the denouement to have any balance or satisfaction for me didn't really get it. Meh.

karen says

this book is a somewhat more women's fiction-y counterpart to russell banks' The Sweet Hereafter with a very slight sprinkling of magical realism for sparkle. like the banks, this begins with a school bus accident in the icy winter of a small northern town, and the way the accident's aftershocks ripple through the community.

baker captures the small new england town mentality perfectly. in this case, it is a town completely reliant upon their sole industry of the local paper mill, and indebted to the family that owns it. this breeds feelings of gratitude and resentment both; a willingness to superstitiously guard the secrets of the mcallister family, but

also a simmering discontent as the mill begins to fail and the future of the town is uncertain.

the bus accident serves to foment these repressed simmerings, and some of the emotional fallout is directed at the recent arrivals to the town; nineteen year old mercy snow, her older brother zeke, and their younger sister hannah, a wise and wild eight year old. they arrive in town with nothing to their name after the recent death of their mother, to find that their estranged father has also passed, and his house deep in the woods by the river has been abandoned and fallen into disrepair. they barely remember their father, except that he was a violent drunk, but the town knew him as an ill-tempered hermit who was connected in mysterious ways to one of the town's darkest secrets. zeke is blamed for the bus crash after his car is found totaled near the scene of the accident, and he escapes into the woods until he is able to clear his name while the two girls stay in their father's shack, enduring cold and hunger, with no one to turn to for help.

one of the other POV perspectives is june mcallister. she is a wonder of determined reinvention; having married well and put her poor florida childhood behind her as she readily conformed to the life of a new england mill owner's wife and all that entails: the sewing circles, the well-appointed table, the sweater sets and the overseeing of all the other women in the town. on the surface, she is complete composed perfection, but inside, she is still struggling to live up to the life she has fallen into, and she will do anything to protect her family and their reputation. june is definitely the most interesting character in the book - the disparity between what she is and what she presents to the world is very nicely handled, and particularly the way other characters resent the parts of her she is struggling so hard to maintain because she thinks it is what is expected of her, when the sad reality is that she would probably have been more well-liked if she had been less artificially maintained. her relationship with her husband cal is another one of those toxic marriages reminiscent of *The Silent Wife*, and summed up perfectly here:

Her need to reinvent her life perfectly matched Cal's need for someone to be wholly consumed by his world and his alone.

and for a while, this works for them, but the bus accident's ripples have far-reaching consequences.

this book is very successful at presenting characters who are memorable and consequential, especially june. it is also very successful at revealing the petty understructure of smalltown life. as crime fiction, it is somewhat less successful.

there are a couple of things i don't understand at all. there is a piece of physical evidence that becomes THE big secret. and as characters learn about its existence, it is alternately the whispered threat, the vaulted secret, the ace in the hole. but all by itself, it doesn't prove anything, so i don't understand why so much emphasis is placed upon it. would it lead to questions? yes. are those questions easily handled by anyone needing to hide the truth? yes. same for the Thing That Was Witnessed. it doesn't mean anything at all, not on a criminal level. socially awkward, yes, and had it come to light earlier, before nature had its way with the crime scene, maybe i could have been significant, but time has passed. it is not threatening. get better clues!

oh, and the ending.... it was kind of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*-y, so that was not my favorite. but there are a lot of good things about this book, even as it straddles the line between "interesting descriptions" and "occasionally purple"

She never told Cal about the encounter, and over the years she forgot all about it until Pruitt's death and the subsequent arrival of his estranged children picked the skin off that wound and left it as exposed as the tattoos she sometimes glimpsed etched onto the mill worker's backs - fiery, fanged creatures posed with wild

eyes and claws drawn, yet trapped forever in the pale of human flesh.

but overall, i would say "yes" to someone looking for one of those "family stories set in bleak america" types of book.

Lynda says

I found this to be a thoroughly enjoyable read. It was hard to put the book down, truly, and even though I am not immediately happy with the ending (it felt abrupt) the characters were well developed and the message was delightful. I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys being drawn into the world of their books and left with a few stay bits to muse over after the final chapter is finished.

Patty says

Mercy Snow
By
Tiffany Baker

Title...

Author...

My " in a nutshell" summary...

This book was about a small town, a paper mill, a wealthy privileged owner, poverty, drinking and some very sad and unfortunate events. Sheep and a red hand knit mitten were key elements of this book.

My thoughts after reading this book...

This book is about a bus accident that occurs on the way home from a field trip. It affects lots of people. Secrets long hidden are uncovered when Mercy Snow tries to prove her brother was not the driver who caused the bus to go off the road. Cal and his wife June own this paper mill. They are not very nice people. I liked June less and less throughout this book. They hold the life of this town in their hands and they are not admirable in their actions...at all.

What I loved about this book...

I so loved Mercy Snow...poor, hungry, sad and brave. I loved her little sister Hannah, too. I loved Hazel and her sheep and her yarns. This was a harsh story but it was filled with sweet bits of tenderness.

What I did not love about this book...

I did not love some of the sad parts with Hazel and her sheep but only because I love animals so much. Cal...so not fond of cheating Cal. He did not appear to be very honest or like able. I first thought that his wife

June would be my favorite character but she turned out to be my least favorite.

Final thoughts...

Would this be a good choice for you...potential reader? Yes...I loved the writing, I loved the idea of this book, I loved the way this book sort of gently unfolded. It was sad and sweet and lovely all at the same time.
