

Good Guys

A Novel

Mindy Misener

Trade Paperback 9781685892654

eBook 9781685892661



- “Mindy Misener’s *Good Guys* is a thrilling debut, a brilliantly paced and plotted novel built around a shattering secret and the transformations it provokes within a family and a community”
— **Karen Russell, author of *Swamplandia!***
- “An intimately observed portrait of small-town sisters in the twin shadows of the opioid epidemic and America’s foreign wars. Running throughout, a profoundly affecting current of hope in the form of the dogged love of siblings. Misener’s debut is exquisitely crafted, emotionally acute and brimming with heart.”
— **Peter Ho Davies, author of *The Welsh Girl***
- “This dual coming-of-age novel captured me completely. I read it over one busy week, and couldn’t wait to get back to Jo and Georgie at the end of each day. Mindy Misener writes beautifully about sisters, family ties, moral complexities, and the fragile landscape of earliest adulthood.”
— **Monica Wood, author of *When We Were the Kennedys***

INTRODUCTION

In a small New England town in 2008, two estranged sisters become embroiled in a war crime involving a local hero ...

Georgie and Jo are sisters, but they aren’t close. The situation seems worse once Jo goes off to college, making it obvious she’s happy about leaving Curtisville and Georgie and their disabled father behind. Then, Gary Clemmons dies in the Iraq War. Gary—the son of their pastor, the hero of their hometown, and the brother of Georgie’s secret girlfriend—was famous for being a good guy.

But Georgie stumbles on a dark secret about Gary, and once Jo finds out, things begin to spiral out of control. The fallout will change both sister’s lives forever. In the end, *Good Guys* uncovers the underbelly of a small town—the darkness of patriotism and masculinity, the harm caused by blind religious fervor, and the ways these dynamics can destroy families.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your own default definition of a good guy? For example, do you think a good guy is necessarily a *guy*? Necessarily *good*?
2. The novel suggests multiple interpretations for the concept of a good guy. How are different characters framed as potential good guys? When and how does the story complicate this label?

GOOD GUYS

3. *Good Guys* alternates between two first-person narrators. Are you inclined to trust one of the sisters more than the other? What makes you feel that way?
4. Early in the novel, Georgie asks, "Does it count for anything that I was usually trying to do the right thing?" How would you answer this question?
5. Do you think there was a single original sin that soured the relationship between the sisters? If so, what was that original sin? If not, what are some of the factors you think are important?
6. Jo and Georgie's father is in denial about his addiction. What else are he and other characters denying, and which denials strike you as more problematic? More understandable?
7. Georgie and Jo can't help remembering scripture and lessons from the Christianity of their childhood, even if they mostly disavow those teachings now. How do faith and church culture influence the sisters and their story?
8. Do you think Jo is wrong in the way she researches and pursues publishing the article? Why or why not?
9. What do you think further investigations into the events in Iraq will or won't turn up, and why?
10. What do you think Georgie and Jo's lives will be like 2-3 years after the events in *Good Guys*?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mindy Misener grew up in Maine. She is a graduate of Williams College and the University of Michigan's Helen Zell Writers' Program. After teaching college writing for ten years, she made a career change and enrolled in Yale Divinity School. She is on track to be ordained in the UCC. Her prose has appeared in *Image*, *The Missouri Review*, *CrossCurrents*, *The Appalachian Review*, *The Pinch*, *The Common*, and other outlets.

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