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While the body of rodeo star Pony Jones lies motionless in the northern Alabama woods, her spirit is on a mission to find her killer. Invisible to the eye but not to the sixth sense, the only thing Pony can do is guide the living to the truth. Her grief-stricken father, Titus, wants nothing more than retribution for his daughter's death, so when former police detective Jo Beth Dawson comes to town, something compels him to seek out her help.

But when Jo Beth and Titus team up to track down Pony's murderer, it turns loose a whirlwind of intense emotion and unexpected encounters. As they uncover more and more clues leading them to the killer, dark family secrets are revealed and the two must search their souls for redemption.

The Tender Mercy of Roses Details

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From Reader Review The Tender Mercy of Roses for online ebook

Julie Smith (Knitting and Sundries) says

This review first appeared on my blog: <http://www.knittingandsundries.com/20...>

FIRST SENTENCE: It don't take no high school education to figure out I'm in a pickle.

A wisp of a girl, with her tiny red cowboy boots - that was Pony Jones. Raised alone by her father Titus after her mother Morning Star, who was 1/2 Cherokee, died in childbirth, she was the first woman to ride the bulls in professional men's rodeo - and she won. Now, at 26, she finds herself dead somewhere on the TN/AL state lines, and for some reason, God won't let her move on. Not only that, but he keeps whipping her from place to place and person to person. She has to help someone, but she really wishes God would let her know what the heck He wants her to do. It's bad enough being a ghost, but to see good food and not be able to eat it? That just ain't right.

Jo Beth Dawson lives in her portable trailer, with booze to keep her company. A former policewoman from Huntsville, granddaughter of Clint Dawson, who formed the first professional rodeo, she is a woman who has given up on life and living. She used to have a savior complex, but when that didn't keep a 14-year-old boy from jumping, the spotlight shone hot and heavy on her actions, and the scrutiny and questions caused her to leave town and her life. When her best friend Maggie asks her to come back to visit, she packs up and drives from her current spot in Hot Coffee, MS. When she parks her trailer at a campground along the way, she discovers Pony's body, covered with a flower called the "Cherokee Rose". Calling the police brings her former partner, Sam Donovan, into the picture.

For some reason, Jo Beth can't get rid of the image of the young girl in her little red boots. She finds herself drawn into her own investigation, of both her family and of Pony's death. In the end, she will uncover the secrets that bind these families together.

The Legend of the Cherokee Rose and the Trail of Tears(nu na hi du na tlo hi lu i)

When gold was found in Georgia, the government forgot its treaties and drove the Cherokees to Oklahoma. One fourth of them died on the journey west. When the Trail of Tears started in 1838, the mothers of the Cherokee were grieving and crying so much, they were unable to help their children survive the journey. The elders prayed for a sign that would lift the mother's spirits to give them strength. God, looking down from heaven, decided to commemorate the brave Cherokees and so, as the blood of the braves and the tears of the maidens dropped to the ground, he turned them into stone in the shape of a Cherokee Rose. The next day a beautiful rose began to grow where each of the mother's tears fell. The rose is white for their tears; a gold center represents the gold taken from Cherokee lands, and seven leaves on each stem for the seven Cherokee clans. No better symbol exists of the pain and suffering of the "Trail Where They Cried" than the Cherokee Rose. The wild Cherokee Rose grows along the route of the Trail of Tears into eastern Oklahoma today.

Source: The Cherokee 1994 Heritage Calendar by Dorothy Sullivan, Memoray Circle Studio, Norman, OK

Told in varying POV's, from the first-person voice of Pony, to the third-person of Sam, Titus, Jo Beth and others, this is an intricately woven tale of love and heartache, as well as hope. I was drawn in from page 1, to the story of Pony and her father Titus, whose loss of Morning Star caused him to retreat from the world to

live in virtual isolation with the only person he had left. You will smile at some of Pony's dialogue (I know, it's sad that she's so young and she's now a ghost, but your personality doesn't leave you just because you're no longer among the living), and some parts of this novel brought tears to my eyes, mixed with a tiny smile - the kind of sad/happy feeling. The only reason this doesn't get five stars from me is that there is some fuzziness around Sam's story and his relationship with Jo Beth, and that doesn't really get cleared up, although I hoped it would. The killer and his/her reasons are not clear until almost the end, and I was happy to see just desserts paid.

Cherokee Rose was the name of Pony's grandmother, and in this novel, the roses serve as a harbinger of sorts. They show up at Titus's home, and he knows his daughter is gone. They surround Pony's body, and pop up in various places where they never were before.

A murder mystery mixed with family drama and secrets, *The Tender Mercy of Roses* is a wonderful, emotional story that will have you smiling on one page, and blinking back tears on the next.

QUOTES

Then lo and behold the preacher waxes eloquent about a option called endowments.

Now, I had two of them suckers setting on my chest. I knew on account of my science teacher. The week before he'd invited me to his house to look at the stars through his telescope. While I was on his back porch trying to find the man in the moon, he sneaked up behind me, told me I was "well-endowed," then proceeded to try to feel both of 'em. I run back into the kitchen, grabbed the nearest weapon and whacked him over the head with his own corn bread skillet. He's the one ended up seeing stars.

...Jo Beth overhear Mrs. Claude Upton refer to her as "poor little rich girl with a no-good daddy." Though she had been only six at the time and hadn't seen her daddy in two years, Jo Beth lit into Mrs. Upton like one of the wild bulls Rafe Dawson used to ride at the rodeo.

"You take that back! If you don't I'll have my granddaddy hogtie you behind a mean bull and drag you all over Tupelo."

Then she'd spat on Mrs. Upton's Etienne Aigner shoes.

Sam knew then, understood with the same clarity he's had when he'd gone home from work and found Lana's closet empty. Titus Jones had no interest in how the cops were trying to solve the crime: he was going to hunt down the man who had murdered his daughter.

God help the killer.

Writing: 5 out of 5 stars

Plot: 4.5 out of 5 stars

Characters: 4 out of 5 stars

Reading Immersion: 4.5 out 5 stars

BOOK RATING: 4.5 out of 5 stars

Samantha says

From Goodreads:

"While the body of rodeo star Pony Jones lies motionless in the northern Alabama woods, her spirit is on a

mission to find her killer. Invisible to the eye but not to the sixth sense, the only thing Pony can do is guide the living to the truth.

Her grief-stricken father, Titus, wants nothing more than retribution for his daughter's death, so when former police detective Jo Beth Dawson comes to town, something compels him to seek out her help.

But when Jo Beth and Titus team up to track down Pony's murderer, it turns loose a whirlwind of intense emotion and unexpected encounters. As they uncover more and more clues leading them to the killer, dark family secrets are revealed and the two must search their souls for redemption."

My Thoughts:

The Tender Mercy of Roses was a quiet novel driven by the main characters and the secrets that have shaped their lives. The story is shaped by Jo Beth, a former detective turned self-destructive alcoholic, with the weight of the world on her shoulders. Jo Beth is one of those characters that I couldn't help but feel for from the very beginning. Both her past and her downfall are given to us in pieces throughout the story. This helped to add layers to the story as Jo Beth is pulled into the investigation of Pony's death. My favorite part of this book was hands down the characters in the story. I felt they were well developed, realistically portrayed, and just were plain interesting. I wanted to read about their stories, figure out the secrets that they were possibly hiding, and see how it all tied into the mystery of Pony's death. The mystery was part of the story but it wasn't the main focus. Instead, the focus of the story was the past and how hidden secrets affected all of the character's lives. It was Pony's story, her father Titus' story, and of course it was Jo Beth's story as well. I was pleasantly surprised at how much I enjoyed this novel. The writing was gorgeous at times and I found myself just going along for the ride that the author was leading me. This wasn't a fast-paced novel by any means but instead a novel that was meant to be savored and enjoyed. I really liked the atmosphere created within the book. The author was able to create a haunting atmosphere where nothing is what it seems and the most important thing was staying true to oneself. I found the ending to be very satisfying and I was sad to see it end. All in all, this is a book that I wouldn't hesitate to recommend especially to those who enjoy literary fiction. Recommended!

Disclosure: I was sent this book to review from the publisher as part of a Gallery Books Blog Tour. My thanks for the chance to share my honest thoughts!

Laura says

Reminiscent of Sharyn McCrumb; Michaels pairs a modern mystery with plenty of Cherokee mountain mysticism. Spirits and strange events surround the death of rodeo rider Pony Jones and down-and-out ex-cop Jo Beth Dawson is caught in the middle.

Michelle Greathouse says

The Tender Mercy of Roses is the debut novel of Anna Michaels and a novel of Fiction from Gallery Books.

Book Blurb:

At twenty-six, Pony Jones is a record-breaking legend of the rodeo circuit, a beloved young star. And when her body is discovered in the northern Alabama woods, it is Pony's spirit - invisible to the eye but not to the

sixth sense - that helps reveal clues to her murder.

Pulled together in a whirlwind mystery of intense emotion and unexpected encounters are her grief-stricken father, Titus, bent on retribution; and Jo Beth Dawson, a hard-drinking former detective plagued by bad memories and a failed marriage.

Jo Beth feels an otherworldly connection with the dead woman - and an irresistible compulsion to uncover the truth. The rodeo in Huntsville leads Jo Beth to Titus, and what the unlikely partners do find is more shocking than murder itself: long-buried family secrets that will bring them to search their souls for redemption...and tie the three of them closer than they could imagine.

My thoughts:

Pony Jones is a young woman of Cherokee descent who lost her mother in childbirth. Raised by her father, Pony was taught the ways of her mother's people in honor of her mother's memory. But that is not all she was taught.

Her father taught her to love the rodeo. And love it, she did. Pony was a record-breaking legend, well loved and respected.

But now she has been murdered.

Jo Beth Dawson was a police woman for thirteen years - until she could no longer handle it alone and turned to the bottle for comfort. She left Alabama, her career, her marriage - and most of her dignity behind - vowing to never return.

But some things are easier said than done. Jo Beth has one friend left in Alabama - one friend period - and Maggie has asked Jo Beth to visit.

Jo Beth expected the visit to be hard - but she didn't expect to be caught up in a murder investigation. Neither did she expect to find long denied family rumors validated - and long buried family secrets come to light.

The Tender Mercy of Roses is a very compelling read. Pony Jones narration is gripping and I wanted to find out who caused her death and why they felt the need to take this young woman's life.

I give The Tender Mercy of Roses 4 out of 5 stars.

Product Details

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Charlotte says

<http://charlotteswebofbooks.blogspot...>

The Tender Mercy of Roses was a great novel, along the same vein as The Lovely Bones. But this novel is set in a world known as the deep south, where the rodeo circuit is the real All American sport and Native American folklore is more common than fairy tales. The story is a haunting story that will capture your attention until the very last page. I was surprised at how much I enjoyed it, but only mildly surprised at who the real killer was.

Suzanne says

First time I read this author. I give her 3.5 stars.

Doreen says

I don't usually read a debut novel then speculate about the author's future writing career, but in this instance I felt I had to. Anna Michaels has an amazing talent, but this book is so uneven that I'm hoping she takes her time with her sophomore work and delivers something really extraordinary.

Ostensibly a mystery novel regarding the death of rodeo star Pony Jones, the book's main weakness is in its utter lack of suspense. The killer's identity is telegraphed fairly early, and Titus' and Jo Beth's search for the killer is dealt with in a pretty pedestrian, almost ho-hum, fashion. In fact, most of the story and dialog, even the establishment of relationships between the characters, is dealt with in a fairly off-hand manner reminiscent of the worst mystery writing.

Where this book shines, though, is in two aspects. First, the magical realism with which Ms Michaels wreaths it totters at times on the brink of the absurd, but manages to work in the end, mostly due to her exquisite command of language. Sentences like "We hold love while we can, the bits and pieces burning through us like a comet. Afterward, we are left breathless and branded" evoke the romance of roses and loss. She chooses her words carefully, burnishing lustrous phrases that glow like camellias in the night (if you'll pardon the flower simile.)

The second aspect is the voice of Pony Jones. Vibrant, occasionally wry and ceaselessly charming, Pony's ghost watches and narrates as her loved ones try to solve the mystery of her death. She's lauded so much by those who've survived her that the reader catches just the faintest whiff of Mary Sue, but it really is hard to dislike Pony.

If this book had been able to do more with its plot, and with its characterization of people who weren't Pony, it would have been truly amazing. I'm hoping Ms Michaels only continues to improve with subsequent novels.

I received this book gratis as part of GoodReads' First Reads program.

Rose says

This book was beautifully written. There was a certain poetic element to the way the author used words. For those people who like pretty or thoughtful quotes for their blogs or anywhere else they post things, this book had something worth quoting in nearly every page. I like the style in which the story unfolded, you get to

read everyone's POV, including the newly dead main character whose murder is a mystery until the end. Well, really you can guess who killed her early on but because the story wasn't just a murder mystery it doesn't matter if you can guess the outcome or not. I liked the main character & even though I thought the fact that she was such a mess would annoy me, I instead developed a soft spot for her. She's such a wounded mess, but that there's still a spark of strength in her kept her from being pathetic & had me rooting for her. I quite liked Pony putting her nose in everyone's business from the great beyond, it made for some humor in a story that would have otherwise been heartbreaking.

Terri says

I LOVED this book. It was a quick read and beautifully written. I love the Author's prose, the Native American folklore weaved into the story, and the characters are memorable. I would LOVE to see this made into a movie. It's that good.

This is the perfect kind of book IMO. It's got a great story, full-bodied characters that you come to love in spite of their deep flaws, a love story, and best of all it is magical--full of mysticism. Reminiscent of The Lovely Bones (without the searing pain) in it's dealing with the subject of death, I found it to be deeply touching.

If I could write a book--this is what I'd write. Beautiful.

Vickie says

For more details, read the Goodreads synopsis of The Tender Mercy of Roses by Anna Michaels.

This book has so much to love: murder, mystery, ghosts, family secrets, and addiction recovery! I really liked seeing the plot from Pony's perspective (the ghost); JoBeth Dawson was a real kick in the pants protagonist, and the ending was quite the surprise! This was the author's debut novel and I look forward to reading more by her.

Go Cards! L1C4!!

Cheryl says

Pony Jones was just twenty six years old when she was murdered. Pony had so much potential. She was one of the best rodeo riders. She could even out ride some of the men. Could this be the reason why Pony was murdered? Pony's father, Titus knew the moment Pony was no longer on this Earth. He saw the signs and a wolf visited him.

Jo Beth Dawson used to be a good cop, until her drinking and a failed marriage got the best of her. Jo Beth would rather be left alone but when she found Pony's body in the field of roses, she knew that she could not just walk away and leave Pony. Sam Donovan is in charge of the murder case. He used to be Jo Beth's partner.

The Tender Mercy of Roses is author, Anna Michaels debut novel. This book did have the feel of the Lovely

Bones but it also had its own favor. When Pony would appearance in the story, these were my favorite parts. I got a sense of who Pony was. She was wiser than her twenty six years. Jo Beth was my other favorite character. She started out rough around the edges but as the story went on, I felt sadness for her and finally triumph for whom she became. Jo Beth and Sam worked well together. The Tender Mercy of Roses has a nice scent to it. It blossomed into a good book.

Melanie Coombes says

I thought this was a pretty good book. Part of the book is told from the point of view of Pony Jones, a 26 year old rodeo star who is found dead.

The other part of the book focuses on Pony's dad Titus and on Jo Beth Dawson, a former detective who now spends her days under the haze of alcohol.

Jo Beth uncovers Pony's dead body and finds herself compelled to investigate further. She begins to realize that she is much more connected to the spirit of Pony Jones than she could ever imagine.

The story is more about Jo Beth and Titus than a suspenseful murder mystery. I was a bit unimpressed with the supernatural portion of the book that dealt with Native American spirit guides, totems and the dead communing with the living. But this is also what made the book unique.

I was not surprised at who the killer of Pony Jones was, but again, I think this book was more about the characters of Titus and Jo Beth finding peace, forgiveness and the strength to continue a meaningful life.

A good summer read! Thanks to the Goodreads First Reads program for this book.

Laura says

I shouldn't really mark this as "read" because it was a DNF. Mysteries are my preferred genre, like comfort food, and this one had such promise but the florid (is there a word for overly florid?) prose just did me in.

Each paragraph had at least one analogy or purple passage in it - "Was it possible the tragedy collecting on her like green scum on dead water wasn't her fault?" is just one example.

If you like that kind of writing along with your mystery, go for it. I'll pass.

Diane S ? says

3 1/2 but a delightful and interesting read. A little Lonely Bones crossed with Alice Hoffman and Sarah Addison Allen but much in it's own right also. Not quite as gloomy and loved the Cherokee Rose which ties together all the sub stories in the novel.

Jane says

This was so touching and just so real and i loved the different perspective that the narrator came from. Loved it.
