



The Most Wanted

Jacquelyn Mitchard

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A naive teenage girl in south Texas falls in love with her prison pen pal. The object of her affection--a charming, dangerously handsome young felon who romances her through his letters to her. After a love affair that defies all conventions, they marry and have a child while the father is still imprisoned. But when he escapes prison to claim his wife and child, what started as a passionate romance turns into a terrifying ordeal of obsession and desire. The young girl's only hope is a fiercely dedicated public aid lawyer who is more of a mother figure than the girl has ever known, and the only one who can avert disaster for mother and child!

The Most Wanted Details

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From Reader Review The Most Wanted for online ebook

Tara says

Sad but beautiful tale about love, painful to read but very rewarding.

Jennifer O'Donnell says

This is seriously one of my favorite books. I've probably read it fifty times and each time it speaks deeply to my soul. I love this book. READ IT!!

Kris - My Novelesque Life says

4.5 STARS

"Arley Mowbray is a drop-dead gorgeous 14-year-old, who, with her long, muscular frame and mature, collected manner could easily pass for 18. And pass she does. On a dare from her outspoken best friend, Elena Gutierrez, Arley writes to convict Dillon LeGrande in prison and convinces him she's a college student (though she hasn't made it out of junior high). Therein begins an ill-fated love story that myths are made of and men die for--except that's not what Dillon has in mind. Living in south Texas in a poor Tex-Mex community, Arley dreams of a less provincial life and secretly begins a love affair with Dillon via correspondence, which produces a flurry of poetry and achy-breaky love songs. Against the wishes of family and friends, Arley weds her amour, who promptly fathers her child, breaks out of prison, and mysteriously disappears. Fortunately for Arley, she has found a guardian angel in the form of Annie Singer, a straight-talking public defender from New York. Annie becomes the mother Arley never had, protecting her from Dillon and a love-starved home. Despite the strength of their bond, both underestimate Dillon's determination to get his child, no matter the cost." (From Amazon)

Loved this novel! This was my second book by Mitchard and is still my favourite. I reread it a few times when I bought it. I can't say why I loved it so much but it is so well-written, an interesting and realistic story and good suspense.

Laura says

I read this book nearly 18 years ago. I remembered loving it so much that I wanted to reread. I couldn't really remember what it was about, but just that I loved it. It definitely held up. I wasn't as in love with Annie's story (in fact Annie quite annoyed me at times), but I loved and identified so much with Arley (for some reason I kept thinking of her as Aubrey; I don't know why.) I just feel like Arley's story is one of the best I have ever read in life. I've heard that Jacquelyn Mitchard feels she can't take credit for writing this novel because she had so much help. I'm curious as to who may have helped her and wondering if it was Jane Hamilton, because the tone is very much like "Book of Ruth," another one of my favorites. So glad I took the time to reread this book. I always have so many on my "want to read" list that I'm hesitant to ever reread, but

it's usually so worth it. Now I'm thinking of other books I'd like to reread. I highly recommend this to anyone who loves to get sucked into a great novel. Loved it, loved it, loved it.

Colleen Vincent says

A story of a young girl Arley whose childhood history of neglect by her mother leads her to pursue a toxic relationship with an adult prison inmate, Dillon Legrande. She gets married to him at 14 years old. Arley enlists the legal aid of Annie Singer to get her and Dillon a conjugal visit after their wedding. On their honeymoon, during which she has her first sexual experience in a prison trailer, she becomes pregnant.

When Arley's mother kicks her out because of the pregnancy Annie comes to her rescue and a relationship is formed that will change both of them forever. This story shows that blood is not thicker than water and that families do not have to be based on DNA to form.

Charlene says

I hate when my job(s) get in the way of reading! That's the only reason it took me so long to read this book. Loved the characters, especially Arley and Anne, and I came to feel very protective of them. Would highly recommend.

Barbara Cadwell says

Only on page 121 after 13 years, the shiny black & gold cover and, especially, the title of Jacquelyn Mitchard's novel still speaks to me. So to keep the love idea alive, sometimes I'll set 'The Most Wanted' on my nightstand, or beside my reading chair.

Distilled down to its purest essence, the following excerpt from my nonfiction book, 'The Universal Casting' studio exemplifies the above. No rehearsals, the story features a cast of real people running down the dream. From Casting to Theatrics midway down a dimly lit corridor, to the Gathering Hall famous for Relationship Seminars facilitated by legend Jim Morrison, the music plays on...

Sudden commotion in the hallway diverts attention, and as Jim returns to the office, so does Anna, making for the darkened corridor. Stopping abruptly in the doorway, she looks, and looks, and looks again at the scary bunch of men tromping past Theatrics! Some wear loaded gun belts, some shoulder hefty burlap sacks, of money, no doubt, and spinning around, she simply blares, "Who are those people?"

Jim stands back, laughing!

O, he knows she's waiting for an answer so he says, "Some of our best players."

"Best? Those guys look like outlaws!"

And just as Anna turns toward the door for another look, she collides with some guy carrying a shotgun. As if nearing the hour, he stops, gives her the once over then rumbles, "Jim here?"

"Yes."

"Pardon me," he says, edging around her.

In your dreams, Jim thinks, notes the funny look on her face and really wants to laugh. Instead, he greets his old friend. "Hey man, what's up?"

Langley shoulders the gun. "Been ridin' all night in search of my dog."

“Again?”

“Why not?”

Absolutely speechless, Anna just stands there picking some of his gooey pine needles off of the sleeves of her hooded sweatshirt, and he’s got them stuck all over his clothes, hair, too! Backing up, half-in and half-out that door, she hears him mumbling, “So, I finally packed it in, tethered Rip, and crashed against a tree.” Suddenly aware of the way he defines himself, she only sees the rugged image. Not bad, she muses, eyes him up one side & down the other. Black leather jacket, belts, buckles, chains, filthy black T-shirt, Levis, and old riding boots. And hair! Wild hair hanging over the collar of his jacket. Why, for all she knows, he’s one of those Hell’s Angels!

Sensing scrutiny, he darkens. “I’m going,” he says to Jim.

“See you in a few.”

“Naw, I’m going back out. Joey’s here.”

“Good God! He still rounding up those kids?”

“For the benefit, yeah.”

Still saddened by the news, Jim asks. “How many?”

“119,000, heard it on the radio.”

“Good grief.”

Rising, shotgun in hand, the outlaw stretches an arm toward the ceiling. If he doesn’t watch out, she shudders, he’ll bust a light bulb! And following his every move, she notes that not only are there no light bulbs, there aren’t even any light fixtures!

At the door, he hesitates, takes something out of an inside pocket. It’s a yellow tennis ball. As if playing catch with himself, he tosses it straight up, and it lands smack in the palm of his empty hand.

Once out of earshot, Anna turns to Jim. “Why are these guys here?”

Jim dumps the ashtray, sets it on F. “Same reason you are, unfinished business.”

U...

Cowboy hats, boots & guns. “But I don’t rob banks, or trains!”

“Who said they do?”

“Well, look at them, and who was that gunslinger that just left?”

“Actually,” Jim grins, “he’s a contractor, and a writer, too.”

“Of what? Books on how to become a thief?”

In which hour... “No.”

“Well,” she counters. “One of those creepy guys was carrying a WANTED poster, with snapshots. I saw it.”

Jim loves this part. “Your photo on it?”

“I’m not wanted!”

Startled awake, Anna Lee glances at the clock.

Midnight.

Snuggling back down, she grabs the dream symbol, a Jacquelyn Mitchard paperback which she’s never finished reading. In her mind’s eye she sees the shiny black cover, the title printed in gold, ‘The Most Wanted.’ Sensing stirrings, her dog jumps down off the bed and retrieves the castoff teddy. Jumping back up, the four-legged jars the sleeper walking down the hall with the gunslinger. And pushing through the swinging doors, Anna marvels at the grandeur of the Gathering Hall.

Maryann says

Why did the author write a book about a neglected 14 year old who writes to a man in prison, falls in love with him, marries him and has his baby? As the mom of a 14 year old, I found Arley to be most unbelievable. I know all kids are different, but I just can't imagine her as a real person...

And Annie? Why was she compelled to go out on a limb for Arley? I never bought it, their friendship never really developed. I was reading and all of a sudden 160 pages into the book I'm supposed to believe they've become friends when the previous 160 pages was all about each person individually with hardly any interaction between these two characters?

Ugh, and all this talk about great looking men then going on to describe them (Dillon, Charley) as pale blond guys...as far as I'm concerned handsome blond is an oxymoron.

SPOILER ALERT:

The ending...why did Dillon take the baby outside??? It made no sense. His "involvement" with Lang did, he was a loser and would use her to find Arley, but why would he take the baby outside with fires raging and knowing Lang had a gun? I'll tell you why, because the author couldn't find another way to get rid of Dillon and make everything OK for Arley and the baby.

Disappointing.

Marian says

I've read this book several times before, and I enjoyed it just as much this time. That's how good it is. The characters are luminous, the writing is lovely, the story is captivating. And who doesn't want to read a book about a 14 year old girl who marries a guy who's twice her age...and is in prison? :) But really. It's so good.

Gloria says

I'd give this a 3.6. The main character is so naive it is a bit hard to believe, and the other main character doesn't seem to get much development, you're just supposed to like, know her via her actions, basically, but it was pretty damn entertaining despite these flaws. I was surprised how much I liked it.

Naksed says

The events of *The most wanted* take place in a derelict small Texas town in the 1990s but some of its characters seem to be living in a bubble of their own, set hundreds of years back, what with the epistolary courtship that leads to what can only be described as an elopement between a child bride and a poetic, handsome outlaw on the run. The author cleverly juxtaposes the dream-like, sweepingly romantic, selfless

and all-consuming love affair of the two young, doomed lovers, (*You are the place I am always moving toward, the yellow light that spills from open doorways*) with the down to earth, pragmatic, filled with selfish concerns and calculations, modern relationship between the two older characters in the book (*I want to be your husband more than I don't want to be a father*).

The title could just as well refer to Dillon Thomas LeGrande, the charismatic 25 year old felon who breaks out of prison to reunite with his 15 year old wife, bar a killing spree or two, as it refers to *Desiree*, the child of that union. Her mother Arlington Mowbray LeGrande, one of the two narrators of this tale, having been saddled with an absentee father and a mother who makes Medea look like June Cleaver, wants to make sure in naming her baby that she will never feel that longing, never doubt how much she was wanted and loved despite the circumstances of her birth, so that hopefully she does not repeat the mistakes of her parents, pushed together precisely because of that lack of nurturing and love in their lives.

Not only did I immensely enjoy Arley's very genuine first person narrative of a precocious, small town teenager who wants to be more than a statistic, but the book is filled with the poems written by these fictional characters, which really help illustrate and foreshadow the narrative. I thought it was so cleverly done by the author, to make the parallel to the Highwayman poem, without romanticizing the character of Dillon, in fact quite the contrary. The poem is a dream but the reality is a nightmare. I also really enjoyed the writing style of the author. Texas is "*the equivalent of Jerusalem for a death row lawyer*." Arley's monstrous mother "*had a face like a good boot, seamed and browned and yet handsome in its way*." Dillon, standing before a Texas brush fire, has his head "*all ringed by orange light, as if it were sunrise-in his eyes, two little fires*."

This is a heartbreakingly, gorgeously written novel, which only lacks the first person narrative of Dillon. I know it was obviously a conscious decision by the author to distance him from the reader and instead focus on the relationship between Arley and her mother figure, and attorney, Annie, but imho, the novel suffered from it. Still highly recommend it, with the warning that this is not a romance and there is real heartbreak in this story, with one of the characters dying (it is foreshadowed throughout the novel) and there are explicit scenes involving a minor girl and an adult so for those readers who want to steer clear of these themes, you would probably not want to read this book.

Rebecca Fernea says

I have a policy that I always finish a book no matter how bad. I think I'm a bit OCD! Thank goodness I had two nights that I couldn't sleep and was able to finish it up quickly. It was very predictable. And the thought of a 14 year old being with a grown man, especially one that is a prisoner.....makes me wonder about the character of this author. Will not read any more of her books. Glad this one was on the clearance rack and I only paid a few dollars for it.

Paige Flotkoetter says

Pretty interesting story, but a little hard to get into.

Barbara says

The book is written in two different voices, that of a female attorney and that of her client, a teenager pregnant by her jailed murderer husband. Both voices are compelling and I couldn't put it down, had to see what would happen next. Beautiful, striking use of language, shocking plot, and very real characters.

Billi says

I, of course, enjoy books in which I like the characters right from the start. What I really love, is an author who can take me from not really being invested in the characters and, without realizing it, I start to like them and become invested in them as the book progresses. That happened for me in this book. Initially, I didn't believe that I'd care about the two main characters, but after a few chapters that changed and continued to develop throughout the story. Arly and Anne were in places in their lives where they couldn't help but be drawn to each other. Mitchard takes us through their journey in a straightforward, appealing way.
