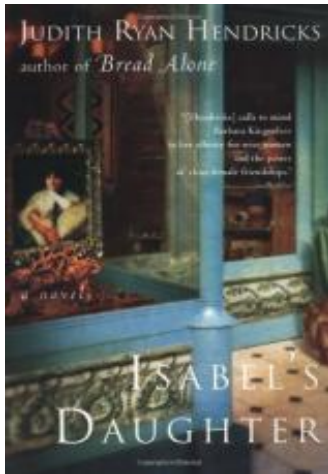


# Isabel's Daughter: A Novel

by Judith Ryan Hendricks

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## About the Book

After a childhood spent in an institution and a series of foster homes, Avery James has trained herself not to wonder about the mother who gave her up. But her safe, predictable life changes one night when she stumbles upon the portrait of a woman who is the mirror image of herself.

Slowly but inevitably, Avery is compelled to discover all she can about her mother, Isabel. Avery is drawn into complex relationships with the people who knew her mother. As she weaves together the threads of her mother's artistic heritage and her grandmother's skills as a healer, Avery learns that while discovering Isabel provides a certain resolution in her life, it's discovering herself that brings lasting happiness.

## Discussion Guide

1. Avery's journey to finding herself mirrors her mother's in many ways. Discuss some of the parallels in Isabel's and Avery's lives.
2. Early in the story (page 4), Avery recounts how a Doberman once chased her. The owner hollered, "Stand still miss! He won't bite you!" Avery thought, "I didn't trust him or his dog, so I ran like a jackrabbit." How does this set up how Avery reacts to most people and situations in her life?
3. Avery stumbles upon the identity of her mother while catering Paul DeGraf's party. He asks Avery to call him so he can tell her about her mother. After years of wondering who her mother was and why she abandoned her, why is Avery reluctant to take him up on his offer?
4. Why do you think Avery has no interest in discovering who her father is?

5. Cassie takes Avery in off the street and becomes the family Avery never had. How does Cassie help shape Avery's self discovery? What life lessons does Avery learn from Cassie?
6. Rita is the closest thing to family, yet Avery turns hostile when Rita announces she's moving in with Rick. Why is Avery so cruel to Rita, and to all the people who try to be nice to her throughout her life?
7. How would you describe Avery's relationship with Paul DeGraf? What about Paul's relationship with Avery? What conflicts must they both overcome?
8. How did Avery's friendship with Jimmie John change her life?
9. Will Cameron offers Avery unconditional, pure love, but Avery seems determined to ruin it. She first distrusts his initial advances, then rips up his Valentine's card, then leaves him when he goes away for the summer after high school. Why is she so reluctant to allow herself to fall in love with him?
10. There's a lot of heat in the story: the hot weather, the spicy foods, and the fire that nearly destroys Avery's home. What is the significance of all the heat?
11. Avery finds Isabel's plane ticket and passport and knows her mother was planning a secret escape. This makes her somehow more sympathetic to both her mother and Paul. Why?
12. What role does the wild dog play during the fire?

## Author Bio

I was born in Silicon Valley when it was known as the Santa Clara Valley, or, more poetically, the Valley of Heart's Delight, because it was a lovely, bucolic place known for its orchards and sleepy small towns. Which means if you have any mathematical ability at all, you can figure out that I'm older than I act.

I had a boringly happy childhood in a middle-class suburban family with my parents, who recently celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary, and my younger brother. My mother instilled in me a love of reading, and I branched out from there into writing, although it took me a while to get serious about it.

The first thing I remember writing, when I was about 7 years old, was a story about a family whose Christmas tree went missing. That was followed by a few plays coauthored with my best friend, Lynn Davis, and performed in her garage to a captive audience of intimidated younger kids. The plays were mostly outer space/cowboy stories?don't ask. In junior high it was gothic romance thrillers, and high school was given over to bad poetry about the varsity basketball team.

I graduated from James Monroe High School in Sepulveda, CA, and went on to a checkered college career encompassing many schools and numerous changes of major. When I graduated with a degree in journalism from Georgia State University, I immediately began to drift from one job to another?journalist, substitute teacher, public relations specialist for the phone company and a public television station, advertising copywriter, airline computer

instructor, and travel agent.

Then, fortuitously, I landed at the McGraw Street Bakery in Seattle, WA, where I fell in love with the rhythms of baking. From that experience came **Bread Alone**, published in the U.S. in 2001. **Isabel's Daughter** (June 2003) grew out of my love for and fascination with the Southwest. **The Baker's Apprentice** (April 2005) is a sequel to **Bread Alone**, and my new book, **The Laws of Harmony** is due out in February 2009.

Because I was raised to be modest, I'm too shy to say, "My novels have been translated into 11 languages and distributed in more than 15 countries worldwide." So I let my husband, Geoff, type that part in.

We now live in Santa Fe, NM, with Blue, who is half corgi, half blue heeler, all comedian. When I'm not laughing at her, I'm baking bread or working on my fifth book.

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