



Title: Small Mercies

Author: Dennis Lehane

Description:

In the summer of 1974 a heatwave blankets Boston and Mary Pat Fennessey is trying to stay one step ahead of the bill collectors. Mary Pat has lived her entire life in the housing projects of Southie, the Irish American enclave that stubbornly adheres to old tradition and stands proudly apart.

One night Mary Pats teenage daughter Jules stays out late and doesnt come home. That same evening, a young Black man is found dead, struck by a subway train under mysterious circumstances.

The two events seem unconnected. But Mary Pat, propelled by a desperate search for her missing daughter, begins turning over stones best left untouched asking questions that bother Marty Butler, chieftain of the Irish mob, and the men who work for him, men who dont take kindly to any threat to their business.

Set against the hot, tumultuous months when the citys desegregation of its public schools exploded in violence, Small Mercies is a superb thriller, a brutal depiction of criminality and power, and an unflinching portrait of the dark heart of American racism. It is a mesmerizing and wrenching work that only Dennis Lehane could write.

Reviews

[New York Times \(Janet Maslin\):](#)

"All of [Lehane's] books, like this one, rely on bitterly fraught situations...not to mention sharp colloquial dialogue, propulsive plotting and scaldingly memorable secondary characters.

[New York Times Book Review:](#)

That tumultuous summer provides the backdrop to Dennis Lehanes excellent and unflinching new novel, Small Mercies. The book has all the hallmarks of Lehane at his best: a propulsive plot, a perfectly drawn cast of working-class Boston Irish characters, razor-sharp wit and a pervasive darkness through which occasional glimmers of hope peek out like snowdrops in early spring.

[The New Yorker:](#)

"'Small Mercies'...land[s] like a fist to the solar plexus...full of bloody booby traps, but the metaphorical kind that blow up futures instead of limbs: negligent parents, busted marriages, dead-end jobs, booze, poverty, violence, resentment, and misdirected hate."

[Booklist \(starred review\):](#)

"Lehane makes Mary Pats transformation utterly convincing, thanks to his ability to invest his characters with a bedrock humanity that defies easy answers. A complex, multidimensional tragedy of epic proportions. Lehane straddles the line between

historical fiction and thriller as dexterously as anyone, and this is his best work so far.

Kirkus Reviews (starred review):

"This taut, gripping mystery is also a novel of soul-searching, for the author and reader alike."

Boston Globe:

"Stemming from Lehanes childhood memory of being confronted with an anti-busing protest in Southie, and riven with violence, *Small Mercies*' story turns just as insistently on a stream of resonant and varying perspectives, perceptibly changing the story's progress and echoing its title slipping in, here and there, tiny but meaningful vestiges of hope."

L.A. Times:

It would be a shame if *Small Mercies* was indeed Lehanes final novel. If it really is, it's a worthy coda to a literary career built on cramped streets filled with unreliable women and men, each trying to find balance in a world of cops and criminals and a town in which you can't always tell them apart.

Washington Post:

"If Lehanes sociological precision gives *'Small Mercies'* a gravitas seldom found in crime novels, Mary Pat Fennessy, a 'mother built for battle,' enhances the effect. She is a 20th-century version of a Fury out of Greek mythology, and her one-woman war against the mob is a fearsome thing to behold."

Chicago Tribune:

Small Mercies finds Dennis Lehane working his finest muscle, employing American history to crack skulls (and belief systems) on the way to a (darker) future.

WBUR:

"[W]hat genuinely gives this novel texture is its language. Lehane is a master at authentic conversation, dialogue that feels like it just exited the mouth of a real person."

Financial Times:

"Aficionados argue about who currently inhabits the top tier of American crime fiction...two names jostle for pole position: Dennis Lehane and Don Winslow. Both writers provide a perfect balance of detailed characterisation and state-of-the-nation underpinnings in their work...Lehane has said that his work is always about hope, however dark the scenarios, and that quality shines throughout this ambitious and multi-layered novel."

The Seattle Times:

"Dennis Lehane is just so very good at this."

Reader's Digest:

"Lehane is now well established as one of America's finest crime writers, who superbly blends uncompromising social history with uncompromising tales of what people driven to the limit will do. As ever, *Small Mercies* is populated with a wide-ranging collection of unforgettable people."

The Mail on Sunday:

"A brutal, thrilling and relentlessly clear-eyed portrait of a city riven by fear and hatred."

Sydney Morning Herald:

To say anything more about the plot would be a disservice to prospective readers, but you should know that Lehane is brilliant at this kind of thing and *Small Mercies* is a masterpiece of the form. The characters, combustible setting and the verisimilitude of the dialogue are such that you'll be thinking about this book weeks after you have finished it.

Star Tribune:

"*Small Mercies* is vintage Lehane. The dialogue is punchy, the action gritty and the mystery intriguing."

Sun Sentinel:

"Lehane delivers an uncomfortable, engrossing look at the destructive nature of racism and hate in an intimate plot. *Small Mercies* centers on Mary Pat but its themes go beyond her."

Library Journal (pick of the month, starred review):

"After almost six years since his last novel, *SINCE WE WELLS*, Lehanes (*MYSTIC RIVER*; *SHUTTER ISLAND*) latest is inspired by a childhood experience when his family was caught up in the violence of the anti-busing riots. Pair this powerful, unforgettable story with S.A. Cosby's *RAZORBLADE TEARS*, another remarkable novel about racism, violence, and parental vengeance."

Stephen King (NYT Bestseller, National Medal of the Arts):

"*SMALL MERCIES* is thought provoking, engaging, enraging, and cant-put-it-down entertainment."

Junot Diaz (Pulitzer Prize winner, Guggenheim and MacArthur Fellow):

Dennis Lehane is a supernova and this is a novel that will throw your entire goddamn solar system out of alignment. Lehane has gone from strength to strength but never has he been more truthful, more heartbreaking, more essential. In the midst of our racial nightmare *Small Mercies* asks some of the only questions that matter: What's gonna change? When's it gonna change? Where's it gonna change? How's it gonna change? This book is impossible to put down and its dark radiance will stay with you a long, long time.

S.A. Cosby (NYT Bestseller, Anthony Award Winner):

"Dennis Lehane peels back the layers of his characters like a sculptor finding the face of an angel in a block of stone. By a true master at the top of his game, *Small Mercies* is vintage Lehane. Beautiful, brutal, lyrical and blisteringly honest. Not to be missed."

Gillian Flynn (NYT Bestseller, author of Gone Girl):

SMALL MERCIES is a jaw-dropping thriller, set in the fury of Boston's 1974 school-desegregation crisis, and propelled by a hell-bent woman who's impossible to ignore. Thought-provoking and heart-thumping, it's a resonant, unflinching story written by a novelist who is simply one of the best around.

Jacqueline Woodson, National Book Award-winning author:

"Beautiful. I was blown away by how Dennis Lehane was able to bring such a deeply unfamiliar world into my heart. *SMALL MERCIES* is hilarious and heartbreaking, infuriating and unforgettable."