



Handle with Care: A Novel

By Jodi Picoult

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Handle with Care: A Novel By Jodi Picoult

When Willow is born with severe osteogenesis imperfecta, her parents are devastated—she will suffer hundreds of broken bones as she grows, a lifetime of pain. In this provocative story from the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author, “Picoult writes with unassuming brilliance” (Stephen King).

Every expectant parent will tell you that they don’t want a perfect baby, just a healthy one. Charlotte and Sean O’Keefe would have asked for a healthy baby, too, if they’d been given the choice. Instead, their lives are made up of sleepless nights, mounting bills, the pitying stares of “luckier” parents, and maybe worst of all, the what-ifs. What if their child had been born healthy? But it’s all worth it because Willow is, funny as it seems, perfect. She’s smart as a whip, on her way to being as pretty as her mother, kind, brave, and for a five-year-old an unexpectedly deep source of wisdom. Willow is Willow, in sickness and in health.

Everything changes, though, after a series of events forces Charlotte and her husband to confront the most serious what-ifs of all. What if Charlotte had known earlier of Willow’s illness? What if things could have been different? What if their beloved Willow had never been born? To do Willow justice, Charlotte must ask herself these questions and one more. What constitutes a valuable life?

Emotionally riveting and profoundly moving, *Handle with Care* is an unforgettable novel about the fragility of life and the lengths we will go to protect it.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Perennial bestseller Picoult (*Change of Heart*) delivers another engrossing family drama, spiced with her trademark blend of medicine, law and love. Charlotte and Sean O'Keefe's daughter, Willow, was born with brittle bone disease, a condition that requires Charlotte to act as full-time caregiver and has strained their emotional and financial limits. Willow's teenaged half-sister, Amelia, suffers as well, overshadowed by Willow's needs and lost in her own adolescent turmoil. When Charlotte decides to sue for wrongful birth in order to obtain a settlement to ensure Willow's future, the already strained family begins to implode. Not only is the defendant Charlotte's longtime friend, but the case requires Charlotte and Sean to claim that had they known of Willow's condition, they would have terminated the pregnancy, a statement that strikes at the core of their faith and family. Picoult individualizes the alternating voices of the narrators more believably than she has previously, and weaves in subplots to underscore the themes of hope, regret, identity and family, leading up to her signature closing twists. (*Mar.*)

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Sure, Jodi Picoult can be formulaic, but few critics seemed to mind her well-researched, domestic-and-legal-drama-told-through-multiple-viewpoints framework for *Handle With Care*. Except for the *Boston Globe*, which noted that "the construct feels a little tired and trepid, creating more distance than illumination," reviewers embraced Picoult's latest offering. Told primarily through the voices of Willow's mother, her father, her adolescent sister, the obstetrician, and a lawyer, the novel wrenched readers' hearts as it examines motherhood, family, and disability. The bonus? Charlotte, a renowned pastry chef, adds a little sweetness to the family tragedy by interspersing her dessert recipes throughout the novel. Copyright 2009 Bookmarks Publishing LLC

From [Booklist](#)

Picoult has carved an impressive niche in the topical family drama genre, tackling medical ethics, faith, and the law in her sixteenth novel. Charlotte and Sean O'Keefe are the parents of Willow, six, who has brittle-bone disease, suffering 68 broken bones in her short lifetime, including 7 before she was born. Charlotte gave up her job as a successful pastry chef to care for Willow full time, doing whatever she can to prevent the inevitable breaks and trying to lessen Willow's discomfort when they occur. After a lawyer broaches the possibility of a wrongful-birth lawsuit, which would find Charlotte's ob-gyn (also her best friend) guilty of failing to diagnose Willow's illness early enough for a possible abortion, the family unravels. Charlotte becomes increasingly aggressive in her new attack mode; Sean disagrees with the lawsuit and files for divorce; and Amelia, Willow's teenage half sister, seeks attention by becoming bulimic and cutting herself. In her customary fashion, Picoult probes these sensitive issues with empathy and compassion. --Deborah Donovan

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Diane Dean:

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