



## I Couldn't Love You More

*Jillian Medoff*

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*Which child would you save?* A decision no parent can even fathom. Eliot Gordon would do anything for her family. A 38-year-old working mother, she lives an ordinary but fulfilling life in suburban Atlanta with her partner, Grant Delaney, and their three daughters. The two older girls are actually Eliot's stepdaughters, a distinction she is reluctant to make as she valiantly attempts to maintain a safe, happy household . . . Then Finn Montgomery, Eliot's long-lost first love, appears, triggering a shocking chain of events that culminates in a split-second decision that will haunt her beloved family forever. How Eliot survives-and what she loses in the process-is a story that will resonate with anyone who has ever loved a child. With hilarious honesty, wrenching depth, and a knockout twist, I COULDN'T LOVE YOU MORE illuminates the unbreakable bonds of family and reveals the lengths we'll go to save each other, even as we can't save ourselves.

## I Couldn't Love You More Details

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## From Reader Review I Couldn't Love You More for online ebook

### Tracee Gleichner says

When I first started this book I realized that the author had a fantastic writing style. While I couldn't understand why anyone would put up with sister like Sylvia, I have been around people like that in my life and the author truly hit the mark. Do I find it a stretch that Maggie and Eliot would have a close relationship with someone who is so self absorbed she tries to make her 4 year old nieces birthday party all about her? To be honest I did. But, being step-mom myself I have seen people in my life that closely resemble some of the characters in the book. People that will try to hold together relationships with "family" members because they think it is the right thing to do, when so clearly it isn't.

I found the plot to be ok for the most part, and did like how Eliot described her life with Grant, Hailey, Charlotte, and Gail. Even Beth. And when her first love, Finn, comes back into her life, I even understand the initial fascination there. But, even though I understood it, there were some things I just couldn't get past.

### SPOILER ALERT

What person would allow their "boyfriend" to totally support their ex-wife who practically gave up on her kids to pursue the life of an artist? Especially when you see the hurt the children are caused because of it? My husband's ex-wife did the same thing but left her kids to be with her boyfriend. She rarely saw them in the beginning of our marriage and even when she started to have a relationship with them again I would have NEVER let him give her any money. SHE LEFT HER KIDS! To me, that seemed totally unbelievable...maybe I'm the only one.

Back to Sylvia. What person would want to spend time with someone who is so totally focused on herself and on being the center of attention, even if that means she has to lie about illnesses and such to get pity from people? I know that it was their sister but it wouldn't matter to me, I would have been much more forceful about putting her in her place. To try to actually take away from other events so all the attention was on her. I also know people like this but thankfully don't associate with them...and wouldn't, even if they were family.

On to Finn. I also remember my first love and our relationship ended abruptly, much like Finn and Eliot. If he called me today and wanted to talk I would absolutely strike up a conversation with him. In the beginning, I found Eliot's reaction to Finn very believable. But, as the story stretched on, I didn't understand the fascination. The plot wasn't developed enough there for me to truly understand how she could be that torn between the two men in her life – torn enough to cause her family such pain. And, I also didn't understand why both sisters were so fascinated by the possibility that he may be in town, to even go so far as to follow him home. Again, seemed like a stretch.

So, all in all, not a bad read, just some things I feel I wasn't able to relate to. Although I do know, things like this happen every day.

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### Caitlin Kunkel says

An excellent portrait of parenting and particularly, what it means to be a stepparent. I really enjoyed Eliot's journey as she grew up and accepted the consequences of her actions. The twist in the middle really shocked

me, and I read the rest of the book in a day. A novel that was surprising, moving, and challenging (in a good way!).

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### **Keith says**

A brave, honest and powerful novel--one I will never forget. The book is about a woman forced to decide which of her childrens' lives she will save. (It happens half-way through so it's not a spoiler.) I stayed up late reading because I had to find out what happens--now that I know, I'm rereading all over again. *I Couldn't Love You More* is amazing; I loved this book.

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### **Cindy Roesel says**

Review first appeared on Chick Lit Central Blog!

One of best things about writing book reviews for Chick Lit Central is virtually meeting all the fabulous Chicks and guys who participate on the site. Of course, getting to read the novels in advance of publication is pretty cool too. This time I'm reviewing Jillian Medoff's novel, *I COULDN'T LOVE YOU MORE* (five spot). The neat thing about reviewing is sometimes the book is sent with information saying it's about one thing and then you read it and you, or in my case, find it's about something somewhat different. *I COULDN'T LOVE YOU MORE* is one such case.

Thirty-eight year old working mom, Eliot Gordon lives an unconventional life in suburban Atlanta with her partner Grant Delaney. She will do anything for her family. She and Grant have two daughters from his previous marriage and a daughter from their relationship. Eliot is obsessed with making sure all three girls feel equally loved and she focuses on maintaining a safe happy household. Fourteen-year old, Charlotte is entering a difficult adolescent phase and is somewhat attached to her artist mother, as is her seven year old sister, Gail. Four-year old Hailey is affectionately regarded as the little Princess but the emotional juggling between the three girls is more often than not successful.

Eliot is the oldest of three sisters, followed by Sylvia and then Maggie. They all have fiery red hair and are extremely close and intimately involved in one another's lives. Eliot is in charge, Maggie is the one they look after and Sylvia is caught in the middle. Overseeing all the girls is their divorced mother the published author, Dolores who is in everyone's business, but trying unsuccessfully to act as if she's neutral and aloof.

Then Finn Montgomery, Eliot's long-lost first love, appears triggering a chain of events that threatens to unravel everything she's worked for. How Eliot survives – and what she loses in the process is a story that will resonate with anyone who has ever been a basically truthful person, had a family or loved a child.

Within the narrative, author Jillian Medoff goes back and forth between present day and flashback. In the past, this technique hasn't always worked for me. More often than not, it has stood out as an attempted trick, but in Jillian Medoff's skilled hands and she uses it routinely the narrative flows effortlessly throughout.

With honesty and depth, *I COULDN'T LOVE YOU MORE* reveals the unbreakable bonds of family and particularly sisterhood, that very unique and in many ways mysterious relationship. Medoff does an interesting thing having three young sisters in grade school juxtaposed with the three older sisters in their

thirties. One watches the lengths they'll go to save each other, even as they can't save themselves.

Jillian Medoff is the author of two previous novels. *I COULDN'T LOVE YOU MORE* will be published May 15, 2012.

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### **Cristine Mermaid says**

I enjoyed the storyline and the drama and the characters were well done and the writing itself superb. However, I just couldn't warm up to the main character. She was pathetic and taken for granted. She ended up doing all (or so it appeared) of the work of raising 3 daughters (2 of them weren't even hers) and then was viciously turned on when a horrible tragedy struck. Why was she helping to support her boyfriend's ex wife? It would be noble if she was disabled or had custody of the children, but she was simply self absorbed and selfish. And then when the ex-wife was supposed to take her own children and she would flake, it was blown off? Seriously? What kind of doormat allows that? But the part I really couldn't get over is when the horrible tragedy (SPOILER ALERT) occurred and she may as well have been burned at the stake like a witch. It was a horrible mistake but she spoke on the phone to an old boyfriend for a few moments, it wasn't as though she did anything terrible. It could have happened to any of them. Oh wait, no it couldn't have because the main character is the one who did all of the child care! It wouldn't happen to the biological father or mother because they didn't actually watch the girls. When the biological parents became sanctimonious at the hospital about how irresponsible the main character was and how she wasn't the 'real' mother, I was disgusted. Why didn't she stick up for herself. If not at that point, then a later point??? The 'real' mother had no right to say a word as she had essentially abandoned her children. UGH! I kept reading hoping that the main character would take a stand for herself but it didn't happen.

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### **Kelley says**

Novel received courtesy of Goodreads.com

Another MUST read!! Oh my goodness, I couldn't put it down! Mowing and house cleaning had to wait last weekend!

I loved the story of a mother's love for her step-children. When I read that the story began as the relationship between the main character and her mother, I was surprised. To me, the main story was the relationship between the mother and her step-daughters. These characters are so well developed, so well described and so real, I felt as though I was reading about a family in my town.

This story will resonate with women, especially those of us with step-children who feel no different to us than our own children. I am happy to recommend this book to my book discussion group as a choice for an upcoming monthly read!

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## **Laura Kay Bolin says**

<http://anovelreview.blogspot.com/2012...>

Eliot Gordon is a working mother with three daughters and a husband, ok well not a husband legally but figuratively and two of the girls are really step daughters. This is her life, her family and she loves it just the way it is. She also has her mother, two sisters (and one is so funny) and an absentee father. Eliot works very hard at making sure the girls are all loved and treated fairly. She seems very aware of evil stepmothers and doesn't want to be one. She looks out for the girls as any real mother would. Overall her life is pretty normal, with a fair amount of normal family drama.

Out of nowhere, her former college lover turns up. Her first love, the one that got away, the guy she pined after for years, Finn Montgomery. And when he shows up, Eliot turns back into the girl who can't say no to him, the girl who obsessed over him. But this time it's different, this time she has a family—a family who needs her attention and she begins to spiral out of control. And as she begins to spiral so does her family.

I Couldn't Love You More starts off with a getting to know Eliot and her family, her life. I really enjoyed getting to know her family. Grant (her husband) seemed like a great guy and I loved how all the characters had their good and bad points. The only thing that seemed odd to me was how her sister, Sylvia kept bringing up Finn, especially when they all knew he wasn't good for her. I guess I wouldn't tell my sister anything about the guy if I didn't want them to reconnect. That seemed odd to me, but her sister was one who seemed to enjoy a drama filled life.

Just as I was starting to feel a little bored, the story picks up a notch with the arrival of Finn. By this point I'm pretty attached to Eliot and her family, so when she starts talking to Finn—I got a little frustrated. I mean it really ticked me off. But there again, some women can't seem to help themselves and I totally saw it coming with Eliot's personality.

I truthfully thought I knew where the story was headed. I was a little disappointed with where I thought things were going—but then BAM! Medoff threw the story in a direction I totally didn't see coming! I'd say this is one of the biggest turn of events in a book I've ever read! From that point on I couldn't, wouldn't put the book down! And I'm going to end there, because you need to go get your own copy of I Couldn't Love You More to find out what I'm talking about! I will not spoil it! I so recommend it!

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## **Amanda Strickland White says**

I loved this book. Anyone whose ever had step children should read it. That's the exact stuff that goes on in a stable parents head. Super funny. Loved the humor and what a fantastic storyline meaning. Must read!!

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## **Michelle says**

3.5 stars. I was thoroughly engrossed in this book. Eliot is a mother to a four year old little girl and stepmother (sort of) to two older girls. This is a very female-heavy book. In addition to the three daughters

there are also three sisters (including Eliot), various friends, an ex-wife, and the whole thing starts with a princess birthday party. I loved the complicated, annoying, frustrating relationships amongst and between the sisters (and their mother) and the conflict Eliot feels between her stepdaughters and daughters. This is all portrayed magnificently and with charm and wit and warmth. The book takes an unexpected dark turn about halfway through – I wish I'd known this in advance as it was a bit jarring, I do think the novel is extraordinarily heavy-handed in the points it's trying to make (like really, really heavy-handed), which is why I didn't rate it higher even though I turned the pages quickly and really enjoyed this author's style. A really solid book overall, just extremely in-your-face with its conclusion.

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## **Lydia Laceby says**

Originally reviewed at Novel Escapes

I Couldn't Love You More will probably make my Top 5 reads of the year. I loved every word. Women's fiction with grit, heart and soul, I Couldn't Love You More intimately portrays one contemporary family that is pieced together and cemented with love. Humour, heart breaking tragedy and hope grace these pages as Medoff deftly explores family, a mother's love, and an unbreakable sisterly bond.

I do not have children, nor do I have any sisters – both of which are at the heart of I Couldn't Love You More, yet somehow this didn't prevent me from relating and adoring this novel. Captivated from the first few pages, I devoured this story at every possible opportunity and almost missed my subway stop several times.

Eliot is not a woman who is floundering when we first encounter her. She's a mother, stepmother and partner and she loves her life. It isn't always perfect, but she's content, does not crave anything, nor does she have any unfulfilled dreams. So when Finn Montgomery, Eliot's first love, and the one she pinned over for a decade, moves back to town, Eliot becomes confused and her fulfilled life becomes muddled as she reminisces, daydreams and shuffles her feet across the line.

Eliot's partner, Grant, is dreamy, kind, an incredible father, and just plain wonderful. Finn is a creepy, self indulgent, tasteless arse. I couldn't understand what Eliot was thinking with her reminiscing. I couldn't fathom what was happening and as soon as I was close to writing Eliot off, being utterly unable to comprehend her behaviour, this novel takes a breathtaking twist. I don't always read the synopsis of a novel or by the time one has sat in my To Be Read pile, I've forgotten it and I actually really like to be surprised. The unpredictability as well as the predicament shook me to the core. Honestly - it was probably the most surprise a novel has taken me by since...well, maybe ever...The thousands of people crowded around me on the subway disappeared and I almost sailed straight past my stop (and not for the first time).

A mother's love and a modern family are central in I Couldn't Love You More and portrayed with unflinching honesty including all the messiness, imperfection and unyielding love they encompass. The emotions are real, believable and heart wrenching and I felt every one of them. I laughed and cried along with Eliot, her daughters, her sisters and her mother and I loved watching her relationships with all of these women grow and evolve and I equally loved all their characters. There are so many themes in this novel surrounding family that I can't even begin to explain or explore, nor do I want to spoil.

I'll stop gushing now so you can go buy the book. There are quick links above so you can start reading Medoff's words now! Take this one to the beach this summer. You won't be disappointed.

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### **Mary says**

Thirty-eight-year-old Eliot Gordon is a working mother who lives a conventional yet, for her, fulfilling life in suburban Atlanta. She would do absolutely anything for her family - her longtime partner, Grant Delaney, and their three lovely daughters: fourteen-year-old Charlotte, seven-year-old Gail, and four-year-old Hailey. In truth, while Hailey is Eliot's and Grant's daughter, Charlotte and Gail are Grant's daughters from a previous marriage. The distinction of 'stepdaughters' is one that Eliot is always reluctant to make with regard to Charlotte and Gail - as she loves both of the older girls just as much as the child that she gave birth to - and Eliot valiantly attempts to maintain a safe, happy home for them all.

By anyone else's estimations, Eliot is living the sort of life that may be considered unremarkable and quite tedious - yet by Eliot's own standards she is quite comfortable and very much content with her life and family. Then Finn Montgomery, Eliot's long-lost first love, appears. His sudden and unexpected return sets into motion a shocking chain of events that threatens to unravel everything she has worked so hard for. How Eliot ultimately survives - and what she loses in the process - is a story that will resonate with anyone who has ever loved a child.

With hilarious honesty, heart-wrenching depth, and a knockout plot twist, Jillian Medoff creates a story that is poignant and eternal. *I Couldn't Love You More* illuminates the unbreakable bonds of family and reveals the lengths that we will go to save each other, even as we can't save ourselves. Ultimately, *I Couldn't Love You More: A Novel* by Jillian Medoff is a true love story - both familial and romantic - as well as a story about loss, change and finding your own sense of normalcy - even when the life around you feels utterly abnormal.

I must say, that while it took me some time to get into this story, by several pages in I found myself utterly engrossed in the book. The story was poignant and well-written, and I immediately connected with the characters on a deeply emotional level. This was a remarkable story and I give it a definite A+! This may be the first book by Jillian Medoff that I have ever read, yet I made sure that I put this author's name at the very top of my Wish List. I'm eagerly awaiting the arrival of two more of her books, and look forward to reading them as soon as I receive them.

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### **Lynn says**

Despite wanting to quit 1/4 way into the book, I continued on to 1/2 way and then skimmed the rest of the book. While I deeply admire Eliot for her role as mother/stepmother and wife, some of her other relationships and how she deals with them angered me. While I understand that you can't choose family, you can choose other relationships and when "first love" comes back into her life, I couldn't relate to why she would be so enthralled by him to begin with. Their relationship from friends to lovers has always been so one-sided with him benefitting and when they finally part ways due to his job-opportunity in New York, he still is selfish. You would think that insight and experience would give her perspective to see that her current life partner is so much supportive and loving towards her.

Annoying points:

- pining for "first love" despite the fact he was self-centred in their relationship

- aversion to marriage despite having a child with Grant. Living together is a conscious choice to be together vs. marriage which is a legal requirement and therefore forces you to be together. Having a child binds you together forever which I think is stronger than just being married!
- relationship with Sylvia, her sister.

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## **Deborah says**

I have been reading "I Couldn't Love You More" for over a week. This is very unusual for me. I just had to savor every word of it. I had to take time to take it all in. Like a delicious Godiva truffle, I wanted to take my time to chew over what Jillian Medoff was "saying." This is an extraordinary piece of literature. It's one that warrants such time-taking. It's a book I wanted to cherish and reread, personally. It may be one of those "nightstand" books because I'd like to keep opening it to passages to think on again and again. This may give you some idea of the quality of Ms Medoff's writing.

I'm not surprised she worked under and studied with some of the finest authors of our times...

it shows up in her work.

I wouldn't be surprised if she didn't do some influencing herself.

The book also meant a great deal to me as a mother and step-mother. Her ability to translate this very delicate balance of love and responsibility,

of wanting to be loved and wanting to do what's right is just masterful.

Her telling of that risk of giving it all in mothering for what may be receiving little or no return in the long run is what each of us mothers understands...but it's more so for step-moms.

The risks in this book are just staggering. And they kept me nailed to the novel mind and spirit.

At last, I thought, someone gets it down on paper.

I write notes about books as I read them, and I read without reading any reviews or summaries of my books if I can help it. In this case, I kept things to a minimum. So one of my notes to myself was about Sophie's choice. Yes, there is that happenstance in this book and it's as horrifying here and as smashing of lives as you can imagine. The dysfunction of families, and the particular dynamics of three significantly different sisters (all playing their Shakespearean roles) is hilarious enough to break the underlying tensions. But, these are

not the only things that captured me about this novel.

Primarily, and in addition to what I've already said about the mothering, I was captivated by its quality of voice. That's a rare thing to me. To so clearly hear the author's voice was stunning. It was hypnotic. It felt as if I were sitting on the sofa of my very best friend and she was telling me her life story. I felt I was hearing her secrets; her intimate thoughts and feelings that she kept inside but was now sharing with me.

This book begins in a sort of monologue. At least, to me there was little dialog.

This sort of thing is ordinarily not appealing to me. But, as I said, it was simply golden in Jillian Medoff's hands. To this day I'm in awe of that.

As I write this, I wonder if my readers will even comprehend how something can be told without an emphasis on dialog and be so powerful and absorbing to the reader!

It would be redundant to tell you what "I Couldn't Love You More" is "about," so I won't do that. Only, I will say it is such a beautifully created story of love and sacrifice and redemption. I thought Jillian Medoff's quote of a Willa Cather saying was significant in the beginning of her book:

" There are only one or two human stories, and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they had never happened before."

This is one of those tellings of one of those lives and times. It may be we've all experienced much of what Ms Medoff describes in her story. It may be this that makes it so relavant and so poinant. And, it's a profound and wonderful telling.

I hope you get your own copy to read and share. You can never have mine...

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### **Jessica says**

I was expecting this book to be a five star book, so I was a little disappointed when the first half of the book dragged on for me.

Eliot, the main character (and I must say I do not like this name for a woman), is a 30-something living with Grant (no, they are not married) and the two are raising his daughters from his first marriage, along with their own daughter. Eliot says she loves her 'step-daughters' as if they are her own, but for reasons I only half-understand, she's not in a hurry to marry Grant.

Her sisters and mother, who are a central part of the book, first bring up Eliot's college boyfriend, and you'd think Eliot had a long affair with the man. It was really more of a fling on his part, a long-suffering crush on her part - but she never really got over him. Why, I'll never understand, although it just may be the one who got away. Whatever the reason, at this point in her life, she should be more focused on her own family.

So after her family's obsession over her 'ex', of course Eliot sees him at her daughter's exclusive day care. Of course, he happens to live nearby. And of course, they start talking on the phone - in secret!

She's talking on the phone to him when her daughter and her step-daughter are swimming in the ocean, and Eliot is not paying attention - until suddenly, it's too late - and she's forced to choose which daughter to save.

This is where the book starts to pick up, but from here on out, we hear very little about the ex - which makes me wonder why he was ever around in the first place, if only to create Eliot's diversion from her girls. Surely, we could've thought of something else?

As a step-parent myself, this was one aspect of the book I could relate to - and I definitely felt Eliot's pain each time one of her step-daughters rebelled against her, or chose their own mother over her - or certainly when she's forced to make a choice, although agonizing, is really quite simple.

The book had a predictable ending, and if you get into books like I do, you have to wonder why these people didn't do all of this to begin with. Surely I'm not obsessing over my ex-boyfriends from college, and if I did run into them - I really don't think I would let it interfere with the care of my child . . .but then again, I'm not in the position, so who am I to judge?

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### **Paula says**

This book exceeded my expectations. It starts out as a fairly well written story (better than a usual summer chic lit read) about a blended family but hangs on until about the middle of the book when an event totally turns the story on its head and leads you through a very strong emotional roller coaster peppered with comic relief.

Don't read the reviews or the book cover, just read the story and see if you recognize yourself in many of the characters and storylines.

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