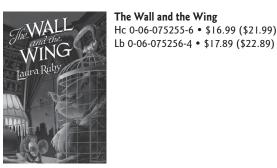
#### Also by Laura Ruby



Laura Ruby grew up in New Jersey in an era predating cell phones. She spent much of her misguided youth writing angry, angsty poems and dyeing her hair lots of colors not found in nature. She now lives in Chicago with her husband and stepdaughters. She is also the author of two books for younger readers, Lily's Ghosts and The Wall and the Wing. You can visit her online at **www.lauraruby.com**.



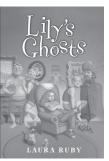
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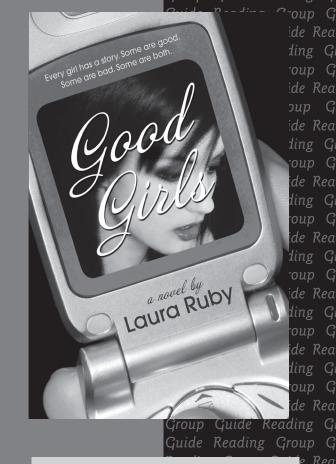
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# **Good Girls** By Laura Ruby

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### About the Book

Audrey is a good girl: She is well-liked, has a great relationship with her parents, and is fourth in her class. But when a compromising cell phone photo of her is circulated through her school and community, she becomes a joke. As she starts to get past the humiliation, Audrey discovers a toughness she never knew she had, gets to know people she never would have known she liked, and learns that life goes on, no matter what.

## **Discussion Questions**

- I. Compare Ashley and Audrey. In what ways are they similar? How do they differ? How does their friendship change over the course of the novel? Do you think it is stronger or weaker in the end? Why?
- 2. If Luke DeSalvio went to your school, do you think he'd be considered a player? Why or why not? Do you consider him one after reading the entire novel?
- 3. What, for you, would be the most difficult aspect of having something so private suddenly become so public? Would it be the whispering and staring, lectures from adults, or sudden propositions by guys that would get to you most?
- 4. What does Audrey do to survive the intense scrutiny she suddenly finds herself under? What would you do? How would your parents react? Would you still be able to focus on your studies like Audrey?
- 5. Of all the relationships decribed in the book, both romantic and friendly, whose do you think shows the most loyalty? Which relationship did you most admire? Why? What makes a good relationship?
- **6.** Do you think technology like camera phones, instant messaging, blogs, and email has significantly changed what it is like to be a teenager since your parents' generation? Why or why not? How does all this instant communication both help and hinder your everyday lives?
- 7. Has "hooking up" replaced most relationships for teens? Are there unwritten rules about these encounters? Who benefits most from this arrangement? Why? Do people still have traditional dates as well?

- 8. Audrey is very responsible about using protection and visiting the gynecologist. Do you think this kind of detail in books helps readers make good choices? Are most teens safe and responsible at this point in their lives? Why or why not?
- **9.** Is guys' sexual status put under the same kind of scrutiny as that of girls? Do guys also need to protect their reputations? Why or why not? Why do you think this happens?
- 10. Reread and discuss Pastor Narcolepsy's sermon on sex (pp. 202–206). Are there any points with which you agree or disagree? Do you think women are becoming more objectified in our culture? Why or why not?
- II. Do you think it would be fun to go to the prom dressed as brides with your friends, as the girls did? Why or why not? What kind of statement do you think they were trying to make?
- **12.** What does Audrey learn from Pam at the prom? Would you have reacted to this confession in a similar way? Can their friendship remain intact?
- 13. Discuss Audrey's changing relationship with her father. What is his initial reaction to what happened? Does he make matters worse for Audrey? Why? In the end, how do they resolve things between them? Why do you think it is so difficult for fathers to think of their daughters as people with sexual desire?
- 14. What do you think will happen between Audrey and Luke over the summer? Does their relationship have a chance? Does it matter with college just a few months away? What would their senior year have been like without the picture incident?
- 15. Who do you think should read this book? Why? At what age do you think it is an appropriate book to read? What would a guy take away from its pages differently from a girl? What makes you think this? Should parents read it?

# A Letter from the Author

Dear Reader:

Writers are inspired to write for all sorts of reasons. I wrote  ${\it Good}$  Girls because I was furious.

Firstly, I was furious because I couldn't watch TV, open a magazine, or log on to the Internet without running into images or text that somehow demeaned women. I'm addicted to cop shows, and I couldn't watch one without hearing/seeing some lurid sex crime described in unnecessarily graphic detail. I would be happily listening to a new song on the radio until I listened closely to the lyrics, which often contained sexual slurs. MTV had a show about plastic surgery that usually featured confused girls who wanted lipo and breast implants to (a) please sullen ex-boyfriends, (b) pose in *Playboy*, or (c) become strippers. (Not to mention Paris Hilton and *Maxim* and the ads for *Girls Gone Wild* videos.) Why, I wondered, did all these women seem to think that objectifying themselves the most public way possible was somehow the road to liberation or the only way to relate to men?

The last straw was when my teenage stepdaughter came home from school upset. Another student was spreading rumors about her, and she didn't know how to handle it. I was angry—not because the world had changed so much since I was a teen, but because it had changed so little.

Rumors were just as horrifying when I was young, but technology has now made their dissemination both instantaneous and exponential. And since people can hide behind screen names, the rumors are more vicious than ever. Both of my stepdaughters, their friends, and the teen daughters of some of my own friends have told me that almost every girl they know has endured the stigma of some sort of rumor—usually sexual—spread by both boys and girls. People send poisonous text and instant messages to one another and post awful things on blogs. When I tooled around on MySpace and a bunch of other websites myself, I noticed that this seemed to be happening to girls everywhere. It was like the whole world was conspiring to make young women feel terrible about themselves.

So I decided to use my fury at the world and began to write. What flowed from my fingers was the story of Audrey Porter, a "good girl" who is secretly photographed in a compromising position at a party. She is humiliated when this picture is sent to cell phones and computers all around her school and eventually makes it into her parents' e-mail.

*Good Girls* is as raw and as honest as I could make it. But something unexpected happened in the writing. A book about the devastation of rumors—a book begun in anger and frustration—morphed into a sometimes painful, sometimes romantic, sometimes funny story about love. So my book is also about the love you feel for your best friends, the love you feel for your family, and most especially, the love you learn to feel for yourself.

I hope you will enjoy reading and discussing it together.

Laura Ruby

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