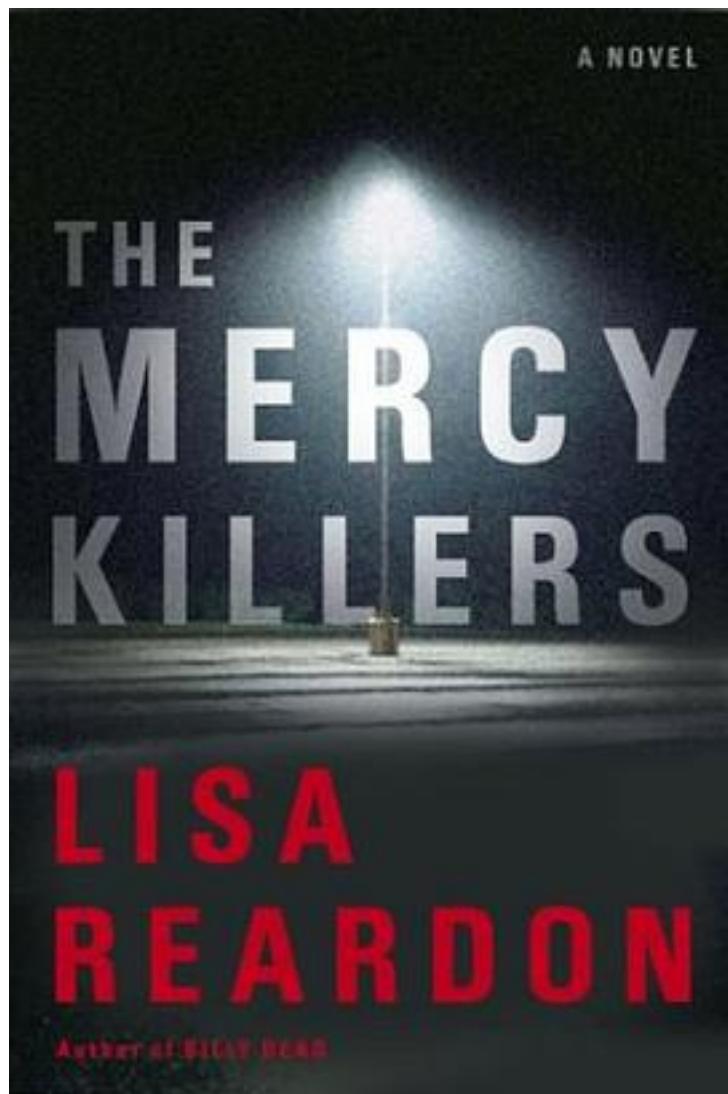


# The Mercy Killers



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Seventy years old, ill, and bent by the ravages of time and loss of self-respect, Old Jerry wants to die. Charlie Simpkins, Old Jerry's grandson, is a petty crook with a taste for trouble, alcohol, and the wrong sort of women; his older brother, P.T., is sweetly naive and very troubled and could just possibly be convinced that such a death would be a kindness. But when Old Jerry fails to show up for his birthday party and later turns up dead, Charlie wants to deflect attention from P.T. He takes the rap, leaving P.T. and a group of close friends behind, and serves in Vietnam to avoid prison time. Several years later, Charlie returns, angry and dangerous with a new wife and lingering nightmares from the war. He finds that his brother is living happily in a halfway house, his ex-girlfriend is gone, and another friend is married. A small and isolated world-a world where laws and taboos are broken on a daily basis, and family loyalty replaces moral accountability. Lisa Reardon's new novel is a deeply involving and satisfying story that illustrates just how far fear can drive us, and where love can sometime send us.

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