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## MEDIA CENTER BOOK REVIEW

*A Severe Mercy*

by S. Vanauken

A life lived in pursuit of the ideals of truth, goodness, beauty or love, eventually will lead to an encounter with God. This truth is exemplified in *A Severe Mercy*, Sheldon Vanauken's memoir of his passionate love for his wife Jean "Davy" Vanauken and how their dedication to love eventually brings them to Christ. Vanauken and Davy meet during college and quickly discover their similar interests, leading to a complete dedication to living a shared life together. They decide to allow nothing to come between them and that all experiences would be shared, becoming truly united as "one flesh." They make a promise to erect a "Shining Barrier" to protect their love from all that could possibly destroy it, including separate interests, occupations, materialism and children.

They embark on an adventurous life together centered on seeking beauty and protecting their love. Career pursuits bring them to Oxford for further study. The Oxford experience is their first encounter with joyful Christians, shattering their previously held prejudice against them. As a couple, they begin to seriously consider the claims of Christianity, reading a number of Christian works, including those of C.S. Lewis. Struggling with the question of faith, Vanauken is inspired to write C.S. Lewis for guidance, starting a life long correspondence and friendship of mutual support. The Lewis letters contain brilliant insights into the practical obstacles, joys, frustrations, and challenges of Christian living in modern times.

After converting, the couple find that their new life as Christians forever changes their former ideal of love in ways that disturb and challenge Vanauken. Davy's total commitment and love of God breaks the "Shining Barrier." Her beautiful witness and ultimate sacrifice enable Vanauken to overcome his jealousy of God and embrace God's will. This book is a true and inspired tale of one man's triumph of faith through the experience of love, suffering, death and "resurrection." Highly recommended!

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