

Where You LEFT US

DISCUSSION GUIDE



978-1-62354-423-2 HC

ABOUT THE BOOK

Cinnamon and Scarlett are the Prince sisters, the youngest generation of the Mad Princes who became infamous in their seaside town when Great Aunt Sadie went missing without a trace decades ago. While Scarlett has been away at school, Cinnamon has stayed to work and take care of their rockstar father after his latest mental-health struggles.

But now Cinnamon and Scarlett are back under the same roof for the holidays, and things are heating up. Great Aunt Sadie's secrets won't stay buried. Scarlett's anxiety is coupled with newfound feelings for Cinnamon's ex, Will. And Cinnamon can't ignore her growing attraction to her coworker Daisy.

As each piece of the Prince family's puzzle comes to the fore, Cinnamon and Scarlett are forced to reckon with demons both personal and inherited and find a way to honor their past without letting it define them.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rhiannon Wilde has been telling stories for as long as she can remember—working as a journalist, a terrible barista, and a high-school English teacher in Brisbane, Australia. Rhiannon's particular interests are caffeine, characters both real and imaginary, and the power of well-strung words to challenge and change us. Her second-person short story inspired by urban Brisbane, "You Deserve Nothing," was longlisted for the Queensland Young Writer's Award in 2014. Her debut novel, *Henry Hamlet's Heart*, won the Queensland Literary Awards Glendower Award for an Emerging Queensland Writer in 2019 and was selected as an Indie Introduce and Kids' Indie Next title in the US.

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ABOUT FAMILY & FAMILY HISTORY

- The prologue of this book ends with the line “What is a history told by those who hated you?” What tone does this question set for the rest of the book? As you read and various characters reveal more of the Prince family history, reflect on who’s speaking. What agendas and biases do they have when they tell this history?
- Compare the list on page 1, in the first chapter told by Cinnamon, and the list on page 7, in the first chapter told by Scarlett. What do these two lists tell you about the two sisters?
- How are the Prince sisters regarded in their hometown? Have you ever been judged as a result of your family name or history? How do these judgments, good or bad, change your relationship with your community?
- Grandma Maggie passes away before the start of the book, and her loss is keenly felt. How do Cinnamon and Scarlett process their grief about losing their grandmother?
- How would you describe Ian and Amy’s relationship as divorced co-parents? How does their relationship and the agreements of their divorce affect their relationships with Scarlett and Cinnamon?
- Why do Scarlett and Cinnamon have such sharply opposed experiences of Christmas (as expressed in the first lines of chapters 28 and 29)? Is your family sometimes divided in their experience of a holiday? Do you have holidays you feel strongly about or engage deeply in like Scarlett does?
- What do you learn about Ian’s career history as a musician over the course of this book? What do Cinnamon and Scarlett think of their father’s career?
- Discuss the tarot reading scene with Scarlett and Amy in chapter 13. What role does tarot play in their mother-daughter relationship? What advice or guidance does Scarlett receive in this conversation? Why do you think Scarlett asks for a tarot reading instead of directly asking for her mother’s advice?
- What role does the library play in Scarlett and Will’s search for answers? What historical and genealogical resources are available at your own local library?

ABOUT FRIENDSHIPS & RELATIONSHIPS

- How would you describe Will and Cinnamon’s relationship? Have you ever remained friends with an ex? What was that dynamic like?
- When do we learn about the rest of Cinnamon’s friend group? Why do you think Cinnamon as a narrator doesn’t describe them earlier?

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- How is Cinnamon's friend group different from Scarlett's friendship with Niamh?
- How does Cinnamon feel about her decision to defer higher education for a year? How has she maintained her friendships while her group is separated by different education choices?
- What role does texting play in the development of Cinnamon's relationship with Daisy? What role does texting play in your own relationships, platonic and romantic?
- How do Cinnamon, Will, and Scarlett feel when Will and Scarlett start developing a romantic connection? Would you ever date a sibling's ex?
- In chapter 36, Cinnamon goes to her friend Phe for advice about her relationship with Daisy. In general, what sources of advice and mentorship are available for young people navigating queer relationships? Where is there overlap with mentorship about straight relationships, and where are the needs and considerations different? What advice from Phe resonates with you? Are some of Cinnamon's struggles and insecurities familiar to your experience?
- "Cinnamon wonders a few times whether this is their first date or their second or if it's a date at all . . ." (page 270). Have you been in a situation where you're not sure if it's a date? What about a relationship where the exact timing of your first date was not clear? Discuss with your classmates and see if it's more common to have a clearly defined "first date" or a relationship that slowly moves from platonic "hanging out" to romantic dating without a clear dividing line.

MENTAL HEALTH

- What do you learn about Ian's mental health over the course of the book? How do other characters relate to Ian as he goes through serious struggles?
- Why do you think the author chose to use visual elements in the arrangement of text on page 32? What do these visual elements express about Scarlett's mental state? Compare with the text arrangement on page 282.
- How would you describe Scarlett's relationship with her therapist? What does she get from therapy?
- Discuss the excerpt from Ian's interview with *Rolling Stone* in 1998 (page 199). What impact would his statement have had back then? How has the public conversation about mental health shifted in the thirty years since Ian was a young rockstar in the 1990s?
- On pages 296 and 297, how do Will and Scarlett navigate sharing space when they're both coping with panic attacks? Why does Scarlett say "We're not, like, mental-health besties just because I told you one thing one time"?

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- When Will and Scarlett open up to each other about having anxiety and OCD in the conversation starting on page 308, how does that change your understanding of their characters and choices so far? Why do you think the author chose this point in the book to clearly name and discuss each character's diagnoses and specific mental-health experiences?
- How is Sadie Prince described at various points in this book? Do these descriptions seem to hint at mental illness to a modern reader? Is there some bias against brilliant female musicians from that era? What other interpretations could be found in these texts and reported rumors? In general, how do euphemistic ways of speaking about mental illness from previous eras make it harder to understand the past and present?
- What extra context does chapter 52 give you about Ian's mental health struggles during the book?