

JODI PICOULT

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF *WISH YOU WERE HERE*



"Alternatingly heart-pounding
and heartbreaking."
—*THE WASHINGTON POST*

MAD
HONEY

A NOVEL

and JENNIFER
FINNEY BOYLAN

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *SHE'S NOT THERE*

BOOK CLUB KIT

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Authors' Note



JENNIFER

On the 8th of May, 2017, I woke from a strange dream in which I was writing a novel with Jodi Picoult. Then I went on Twitter, and tweeted out, *I dreamed I was coauthoring a book with Jodi Picoult!*

JODI

Those who say nothing good ever happens on Twitter clearly have not had Jenny Boylan—an author I have long admired—post something about coauthoring a novel.

JENNIFER

We hadn't swapped more than two or three messages before Jodi wrote back to me, in all caps, and I quote: "OMG I LOVE THIS LET'S DO IT."

JODI

This book began as a literal dream, and became a metaphorical one. I wondered, *What if we could combine our voices, and tell both Olivia's and Lily's stories?* The result was a lot of fun . . . and a lot of work.

JENNIFER

In any case, getting to write this book with Jodi has been one of the greatest gifts of my long career as an author. At every moment she treated me with respect and good humor and love. She was fierce, forgiving, and funny. There were days when she had more faith in my ability to find my way through this story than I had in myself.

JODI

I can't count all the times Jenny made me cry with passages so honest and raw they took my breath away, and made me want to write something equally as good.

JENNIFER

I hope that Lily's story opens hearts. All of us have something in our hearts like a flower that cannot bloom because it is held in secret. The adventure of life can be to get that thing out of the darkness where it lies and let the sun shine on it. . . . So it can go back inside your heart facing the right direction.

JODI

What would I like you to take away from this novel? Absolutely nothing. I'd like you to *give*—a chance, a thought, a damn. . . . We are all flawed, complicated, scarred dreamers; we have more in common with each other than we don't. Sometimes making the world a better place just involves creating space for the people who are already in it.

Sincerely,

Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney Boylan

Discussion Questions

1. What surprised you about *Mad Honey*? Did you have any emotional reactions? Discuss.
2. Both Olivia and Lily share a love for fun facts, especially about bees. What is the significance of having these bee facts in the book; is there one that particularly stood out to you?
3. Olivia's chapters move forward in time while Lily's move backward. How did this affect the story's narrative and the way information was revealed? Why do you think the authors specifically chose to focus the points of view on Olivia and Lily?
4. In many ways, Asher and Lily are two sides of the same coin. How does Asher's relationship with Braden (or lack thereof) mirror Lily's relationship with her own father and how does this contrast with the relationships they have with their mothers?
5. Do you believe someone who hits and abuses their partner can ever change? And if you were in Olivia's shoes, would you be worried about the potential cycle of abuse that could pass from parent to child? If so, what steps may you have tried to take to prevent this?
6. Did you agree or disagree with Olivia's decision to keep Braden's abuse a secret from Asher? Knowing what we know about the things Olivia and Asher hid from each other, does this ultimately do more to help or hurt Asher?
7. Do you believe that love between a parent and child can be unconditional? Are some actions, taken by either the parent or child, beyond redemption and deemed unforgiveable? Discuss.
8. Was the volatility of Lily's relationship with Asher a red flag (a sign that a person will turn out to be—or is—a bad or problematic partner), or something that could be chalked up to a teenage relationship?
9. At one point Jordan snaps at Asher and says, "The truth has no place in a court of law, goddamnit. . . . And since the prosecution's already painted you as an abuser and a liar, how good do you actually think your word is?" In what ways do the procedures of this trial—and the larger justice system—affect Asher and the other witnesses?

Discussion Questions

10. The court of public opinion impacts all the characters involved in the case, something we've seen continuously play out in contemporary society, especially with the popularity of social media and instant access to the news cycle. Do you think it's fair for casual observers to take sides and make assumptions about events they see and hear, and why do you think we, as a society, are so drawn to doing this?
11. What did you think when you learned that Lily was trans? And which societal factors in your life may have affected how you felt about this?
12. During Elizabeth's conversation with Olivia, she says, "You know what they say: if you've met one trans person, you've . . . met one trans person. What's true for Lily might not be true for someone else." Which other movies, shows, and/or books offer genuine depictions of the trans characters and stories featured?
13. How did you think Lily died before it was revealed in the end? Did you make certain assumptions about other characters and who was your prime suspect?
14. One of Olivia's beehives is attacked by a bear and she springs into action to save the bees, even as she knows it's a lost cause. What does this symbolize within the larger story?
15. What do you think about the prosecutor's decision not to charge Maya? Do you think Mike is correct in assuming that Ava prefers this as well? Why or why not?

Mad Honey Playlist

“Money” by Pink Floyd

“Suite No. 1 in G major, BWV 1007: I. Prélude” by Yo-Yo Ma

“Lily of the Valley” by Queen

“Duet for Cello and Oboe” by Eugène Bozza

“Cello Concerto No. 1” (Saint-Saëns)

“A Taste of Honey” by Barbra Streisand

“Honey” by Tori Amos

“Arpeggione Sonata” by Franz Schubert

“Wagon Wheel” by Old Crow Medicine Snow

“Dear Someone” by Gillian Welch

“Reviewing the Situation” by Ron Moody

“Straight, No Chaser” by Miles Davis

“Can’t Stop the Feeling” by Justin Timberlake

“Cold Water” by Major Lazer

“One Dance” by Drake

“When We Were Young” by Adele

“Run the World (Girls)” by Beyoncé

“Born This Way” by Lady Gaga

“I Wanna Dance with Somebody (Who Loves Me)” by Whitney Houston

“Always Be My Baby” by Mariah Carey

“Style” by Taylor Swift

“Sometimes” by Britney Spears

“Wrecking Ball” by Miley Cyrus

“Respect” by Aretha Franklin

“One Last Time” by Ariana Grande

“Chandelier” by Sia

“Walk On By” by Dionne Warwick

“Believe” by Cher

“Roar” by Katy Perry

“It’s All Coming Back to Me Now” by Celine Dion



[Listen here on Spotify!](#)

Beekeeper's Granola

INGREDIENTS

32 oz. Bob's Red Mill GF
Old Fashioned Rolled Oats
½ cup pumpkin seeds
1 cup sliced almonds
½ cup honey
½ cup canola oil

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 225°F. Spray a large baking sheet (21 × 15 inches) with cooking spray.

In a large bowl combine the oats, pumpkin seeds, and almonds. Pour the honey and oil over the mixture and toss lightly, making sure the oat mixture is covered. Spread on baking sheet and bake for 90 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

Granola keeps for several weeks in a sealed container.



Bee's Knees cocktail

INGREDIENTS

½ oz. honey simple syrup
1 oz. lemon juice
2 oz. gin
Lemon peel

INSTRUCTIONS

Fill a cocktail shaker with ice. Add ingredients (except peel) and shake; strain into a martini glass. Twist the lemon peel and set inside glass.

HONEY SIMPLE SYRUP

In a small saucepan combine ⅓ cup honey and ⅓ cup water. Over low heat stir the mixture until honey starts to dissolve. Let cool and pour into a squeeze bottle or glass container. Keeps for several weeks.



Honey Lemonade

INGREDIENTS

1 cup lemon juice, freshly squeezed
½ cup raw honey
3 cups water
1 cup ice cubes

INSTRUCTIONS

Fill a cocktail shaker with ice. Add ingredients (except peel) and shake; strain into a martini glass. Twist the lemon peel and set inside glass.

HONEY SIMPLE SYRUP

In a small saucepan combine ⅓ cup honey and ⅓ cup water. Over low heat stir the mixture until honey starts to dissolve. Let cool and pour into a squeeze bottle or glass container. Keeps for several weeks.





Resources

For guides, articles, and resources for LGBTQ+ young people, parents, and allies, please visit one of these sites.

- GLAAD: GLAAD.org
- PFLAG: PFLAG.org
- Trans Youth Equality Foundation: TransYouthEquality.org
- Human Rights Campaign: HRC.org
- The Trevor Project: TheTrevorProject.org/Resources

To find out more about how to support the bees and grow their population, please visit SaveTheBees.com.