Hello Stranger

by Katherine Center



About the Book

The glorious new novel from the beloved author whose bright, hopelessly romantic *New York Times* bestsellers have been called ?[m]y perfect 10 of a book? (Emily Henry) and cheered for their ?speedy pacing and sexual tension for miles? (*People*).

Love isn?t blind, it?s just a little blurry.

Sadie Montgomery never saw what was coming. Literally! One minute she?s celebrating the biggest achievement of her life --- placing as a finalist in the North American Portrait Society competition --- the next, she?s lying in a hospital bed diagnosed with a ?probably temporary? condition known as face blindness. She can see, but every face she looks at is now a jumbled puzzle of disconnected features. Imagine trying to read a book upside down and in another language. This is Sadie?s new reality with every face she sees.

But as she struggles to cope, hang on to her artistic dream, work through major family issues, and take care of her beloved dog, Peanut, she falls in love --- or is it lust, or a temporary obsession to distract from the real problems in her life? --- with not one man but two very different ones. The timing couldn?t be worse.

If only her life were a little more in focus, Sadie might be able to find her way. But perceiving anything clearly right now seems impossible. Even though there are things we can only find when we aren?t looking. And there are people who show up when we least expect them. And there are always, always other ways of seeing.

Discussion Guide

1. The strangers-to-lovers trope often found in romantic novels is taken to the next level here by adding Sadie?s face blindness to the mix. How is this trope used throughout the novel, and why is it so significant to the story and Sadie? Are

there any other tropes (such as a love triangle, forced proximity, etc.) that may have significance? Why?

2. After the surgery and finding out that she has developed acquired apperceptive prosopagnosia, Sadie is determined to not tell anyone about it who didn?t need to know. Do you think Sadie should have been more open about her face blindness, or do you think she was right in keeping it a secret to prevent embarrassment? Discuss further.

3. Both Sadie and Joe have experienced heartbreak and loss in some way --- Sadie lost her mother and, subsequently, the attentions of her father, and Joe lost his wife when she cheated on him. How did these losses and heartbreaks bring Sadie and Joe closer together?

4. In Chapter 11, Dr. Nicole Thomas-Ramparsad explains confirmation bias to Sadie, describing it as the idea that people ?tend to decide on what the world is and who people are and how things are --- and then we look for evidence that supports what we?ve already decided.? Discuss the significance of confirmation bias. Based on the description in the book and what you may already know about confirmation bias, do you think it has any impact on your life? If so, how?

5. Sadie mentions in Chapter 1 that she doesn?t know what happened to the portrait her mom painted for the North American Portrait Society contest, but after she and her dad reconcile, he sends her the portrait, which is when she realizes she can recognize her own face again. Discuss the significance of this scene in Chapter 29 and how it provides closure for Sadie.

6. Painting plays a significant role in the story and in Sadie?s life. In the end, she realizes that art means more to her than winning a contest. Do you think the judges were fair to make snide comments about her piece and not reward her any points? Even though there isn?t an illustration of Sadie?s art, the author describes the piece in detail. Based on the author?s description, how does Sadie?s art make you feel, and do you think you would have reacted in the same way as the judges?

7. Discuss the theme of forgiveness and its importance to Sadie?s character development. Why does she forgive Parker even after everything Parker did and said to her and to others? How does Sadie?s forgiving her dad impact the stepsisters? relationship?

8. Sadie was told her mother died of a stroke, but throughout the novel she learns more about how her mother actually died and what happened in the days leading up to her death. How does learning the truth about her mother change how Sadie feels about her mom and her relationship with her dad?

9. In Chapter 26, Augusta Ross makes a sudden appearance that helps clear up Parker?s lies. Did you expect her to be the same person Sadie gave her dress to at the coffee shop? Why is Augusta?s confirmation of what actually happened when Sadie and Parker were younger so significant? Why do you think Parker retreated when she realized who Augusta was and when all was revealed to her mom and Sadie?s dad?

10. In Chapter 2, Sadie explains, ?I?m a portrait artist, so I can never look at a face for the first time without mentally assessing it for its shapes and structure and most compelling features.? However, without the ability to see faces, Sadie struggles to create her art, so she uses touch as a new technique to paint. Discuss how taking away the one ability needed to complete her art actually ends up helping Sadie create her best piece yet. Also explore the importance of that physical intimacy for Sadie and her relationship with Joe.

11. Did you suspect that Joe and Dr. Oliver Addison were the same person the entire time, or did the ending come as a surprise to you? Do you think Joe/Oliver should have clarified who he was to Sadie sooner? Explore the possibilities and discuss how this clarification might have changed Sadie?s feelings for Joe/Oliver.

12. Author Katherine Center has talked about how love stories are particularly nourishing to read because the stories themselves are structured to give us something to look forward to. Love stories create a positive feeling of hope as we anticipate the characters overcoming all the obstacles in the story and finding each other. Sadie faces a lot of hardships in the story, but those hardships force her to re-think some unquestioned assumptions in her life --- allowing her to grow. Is Sadie a stronger, wiser person by the end of the story? What role does falling in love play for her?

13. Center wants us all to ?read for joy? --- to read for pleasure, and fun, and play --- and encourages us all to find our own compass for the stories we love. Do you read for joy in your own life? How do you decide what books to read? What kind of stories are you drawn to?

Author Bio

BookPage calls Katherine Center ?the reigning queen of comfort reads.? She?s the *New York Times* bestselling author of 11 books, including HOW TO WALK AWAY, THINGS YOU SAVE IN A FIRE, WHAT YOU WISH FOR, THE BODYGUARD, HELLO STRANGER, THE ROM-COMMERS, THE LOVE HATERS and THE SHIPPERS. Katherine writes laugh-and-cry books about how life knocks us down --- and how we get back up. She?s been compared to both Jane Austen and Nora Ephron, and the Dallas *Morning News* calls her stories, ?satisfying in the most soul-nourishing way.?

Her books have made countless Best Of lists, including *RealSimple*?s Best Books of 2020, Amazon's Top 100 Books of 2019, Goodreads' Best Books of the Year, and many more. Bestselling author Emily Henry calls THE BODYGUARD ?a shot of pure joy.? The movie adaptation of Katherine?s novel THE LOST HUSBAND (starring Josh Duhamel) hit #1 on Netflix, and her novel HAPPINESS FOR BEGINNERS is in production now as a Netflix original starring Ellie Kemper.

Katherine lives in her hometown of Houston, Texas, with her husband, two kids and their fluffy-but-fierce dog.

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