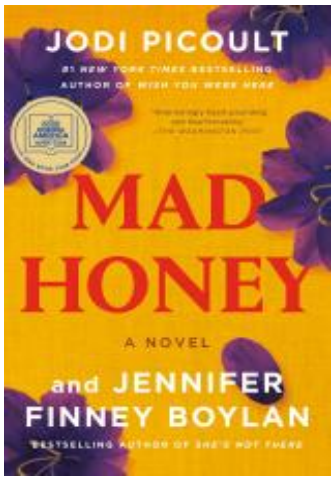
Mad Honey

by Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney Boylan



About the Book

A soul-stirring novel about what we choose to keep from our past and what we choose to leave behind, from the *New York Times* bestselling author of WISH YOU WERE HERE and the bestselling author of SHE'S NOT THERE.

Olivia McAfee knows what it feels like to start over. Her picture-perfect life --- living in Boston, married to a brilliant cardiothoracic surgeon, raising their beautiful son, Asher --- was upended when her husband revealed a darker side. She never imagined that she would end up back in her sleepy New Hampshire hometown, living in the house she grew up in and taking over her father?s beekeeping business.

Lily Campanello is familiar with do-overs, too. When she and her mom relocate to Adams, New Hampshire, for her final year of high school, they both hope it will be a fresh start.

And for just a short while, these new beginnings are exactly what Olivia and Lily need. Their paths cross when Asher falls for the new girl in school, and Lily can?t help but fall for him, too. With Ash, she feels happy for the first time. Yet at times, she wonders if she can trust him completely.

Then one day, Olivia receives a phone call: Lily is dead, and Asher is being questioned by the police. Olivia is adamant that her son is innocent. But she would be lying if she didn?t acknowledge the flashes of his father?s temper in Ash, and as the case against him unfolds, she realizes he?s hidden more than he?s shared with her.

MAD HONEY is a riveting novel of suspense, an unforgettable love story, and a moving and powerful exploration of the secrets we keep and the risks we take in order to become ourselves.

Discussion Guide

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, goddammit.... 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?

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?

Author Bio

Jodi Picoult is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of over 30 novels, including HOLLOW BONES, BY ANY OTHER NAME, MAD HONEY (co-authored with Jennifer Finney Boylan), WISH YOU WERE HERE, THE BOOK OF TWO WAYS, A SPARK OF LIGHT, SMALL GREAT THINGS, LEAVING TIME and MY SISTER'S KEEPER, and, with daughter Samantha van Leer, two young adult novels, BETWEEN THE LINES and OFF THE PAGE. She lives in New Hampshire with her husband.

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