

# Heart of Glass: A Memoir

by Wendy Lawless

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## About the Book

The follow up to Wendy's first memoir *CHANEL BONFIRE* --- which delved into Wendy's tumultuous upbringing and focused specifically on her volatile mother, Georgann Rae --- *HEART OF GLASS* tell the story of a girl without a roadmap for life who leaves her car wreck past to find herself in the gritty, dangerous, exciting nadir of downtown New York City. Wendy delves into her days as an eighties party girl looking for love in all the wrong places. With thrift store wardrobes, punk rockers, drug parties, cross-dressing, and run-ins with the FBI, this is the darkly funny story of a terribly misguided young actress living in 1980s New York and searching for Mr. Right, an identity, a job, and occasionally, a free meal. Oh, and she still has a crazy mother.

## Discussion Guide

### Introduction

In this edgy and romantic follow-up to her *New York Times* bestselling debut memoir, *CHANEL BONFIRE*, Wendy Lawless chronicles her misguided twenties --- a darkly funny story of a girl without a roadmap for life who flees her disastrous past to find herself in the gritty heart of 1980s New York City.

### Topics & Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think Wendy chose to begin her story with the scene of the cops busting into her apartment in the middle of the night? In what ways was this scene a metaphor for Wendy's twenties, or perhaps for 1980s New York City?
2. One of the biggest themes of the book is love --- or rather, the difficulty of finding it. ?What was love? Compatibility? Good sex? The ability to stay up all night talking? Or to be able to be together and not say a word?? Wendy wonders on

page 22. Take a look at Wendy's boyfriends and love interests throughout the book. How is each relationship distinct from the others? To any of them share similarities? What kind of love does Wendy find (if any) with each man?

3. How is Wendy's abortion a turning point for her? Why do you think that soon afterwards, she drops out of NYU?
4. When Wendy and Robin spend Christmas with their father's family in Minnesota, the experience is bittersweet for them. Do you understand their reaction? Why or why not? Have you ever had a similar experience?
5. In Chapter Eight, Wendy begins her schooling at the National Theatre Conservatory in Colorado. How is life in Colorado different for Wendy from what it was like in the first seven chapters? In what way is being at NTC a turning point for her?
6. On page 248, Wendy muses, "Maybe home wasn't somewhere where you found or were born into but something you made." Discuss the many different places Wendy calls home throughout the novel. What do they each have in common? How are they different?
7. In the last scene of the book when Wendy marries David, she says, "I may not have known exactly what I was looking for when I'd first come to New York or for most of the time since, but I knew then that I'd found it" (360). In what ways has Wendy come full circle since the beginning of the book? What is it do you think she was looking for and has now found?
8. Much of Wendy's love for the theater comes from watching her father, a successful theater actor. Why do you think this draws Wendy to the theater? What is she seeking in acting that she feels she can't find anywhere else?
9. What is your opinion of Wendy as a narrator and how she tells her story? Why do you think she was able to stay grounded in the midst of such a chaotic young adulthood?
10. Why did you choose HEART OF GLASS for your book club discussion? What are your overall thoughts about the book? How does it compare to other memoirs your group has read?

### **Enhance Your Book Club**

1. Read Wendy Lawless's first memoir, CHANEL BONFIRE. How do you think Wendy the narrator has changed from CHANEL BONFIRE to HEART OF GLASS? Can you find any similarities between the two?
2. If you enjoyed CHANEL BONFIRE, consider adding another memoir set in the epochal days of New York City to your discussion line-up, such as GIRL IN A BAND by Kim Gordon, JUST KIDS by Patti Smith, or I DREAMED I WAS A VERY CLEAN TRAMP by Richard Hell.
3. Put together a HEART OF GLASS soundtrack and play it as background music during your book club gathering. Songs mentioned in the memoir include "Mad About the Boy" by Noël Coward, "Don't Stand So Close to Me" by The Police, "Pull Up to the Bumper" by Grace Jones, and "Madness" by Madness.
4. When she's describing living on a budget in Manhattan, Wendy mentions some of the places she would eat at,

including Veselka and The Dojo (now simply called Dojo), which are both still in business today. ?Instead of Meat Loaf Monday and Taco Tuesday, it was Tahini Thursday and Pickle Soup Sunday? (14). Try sampling or preparing some of the foods that Wendy survived on, such as tahini, rice bowls, borscht, challah bread, and chicken noodle soup.

## Author Bio

Wendy Lawless is an actress who has appeared on television, in regional theatre, Off-Broadway in David Ives' Obie-winning play, "All in the Timing," and on Broadway in "The Heidi Chronicles." Her essays about being a mom in Hollywood, including "Whatever Happened to Musical Chairs?" have appeared in the local Los Angeles press. She lives in Glendale, California with her screenwriter husband and their two children. HEART OF GLASS is the follow-up to CHANEL BONFIRE, her debut memoir.

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