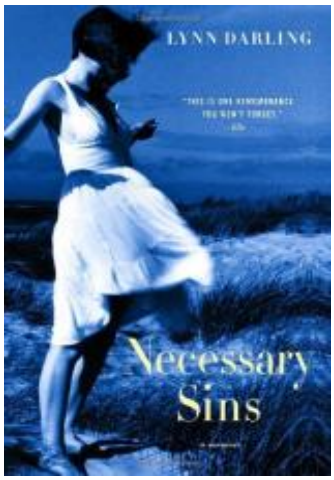
Necessary Sins

by Lynn Darling



About the Book

When Lynn Darling met Lee Lescaze at the *Washington Post*, they could not have been more different. He was older, married, more ?establishment,? a celebrated foreign correspondent and editor. She, who entered Harvard at age sixteen, was a brilliant wild child of the sixties. She lived life in the present tense, where every affair was an adventure. Then Darling fell in love and everything changed.

This is a story of the many lessons love can teach us, of a marriage turned upside down and inside out, and all the tenderness, thrills, comfort, and yes, even disappointment, that comes with the territory. Lynn Darling thought she knew the narrative of her own life, until it really began with her ?one true north,? and now, ten years after his death, her story is still unfolding.

Discussion Guide

1. The book opens with this line from the preface: ?On the fifth floor of Cabot Hall, the freshman women talk endlessly of sex,? (page 1). Discuss the role that physical love played in Lynn Darling?s life. What did precocious 16-year-old Lynn understand of it, and how does this change or not change throughout the memoir?

2. Lynn describes the many ways in which she and her husband were different?she was wild, unformed, reckless; he was refined, worldly, restrained. But how were they alike? What was at the core of the attraction between them?

3. What do you interpret the book?s title to mean? Does life make some sins necessary? If they are necessary, are they sins?

4. ?I?m afraid,? I said finally, ?of not being any good. If I don?t write, I?ll never find out how bad I am,? (page 26). Lynn details her inherent lack of confidence and how it adversely affected her life and work. Do you think these issues

are resolved? Discuss what makes having confidence in oneself so challenging for many, both men and women.

5. ?Everyone has their drug of choice. For some it?s sex; for others, alcohol or religion, or art, or even drugs themselves. Mine was transgression, or so I liked to think,? (page 41). Explore this statement. What were some of the transgressions Lynn made? Did she correct any of them? What does the writing of this memoir represent?

6. Discuss the author?s narrative style (her use of flashbacks, and foreshadowing). How did it affect your reading experience?

7. ?Once, in college, a good friend had asked which I would prefer?to be immortalized as a character in a novel, or to be cherished as a friend for life. A character, I said, of course,? (page 118). How would you answer this question?

8. Discuss the relationships between the mothers and daughters in **Necessary Sins**, considering this statement by Lynn: ?Mothers and daughters live in a matrix of emotions that blind insight and hobble love,? (page 156). Yet, she dedicates the book to her daughter. Why do you think she chose to do so?

9. Lynn describes being devastated when Lee gives her towels for the first Valentine?s Day they shared after getting married, lamenting that Lee had become different from the man she first fell in love with, ?the individuals we once were had been permanently changed by the life we lived together,? (Chapter Nine). Do you agree that people change once they are married? What was she really lamenting? Do you sympathize?

10. The author writes candidly about her rage during the time she was caring for Lee in his illness. What is your response to this?

Author Bio

Lynn Darling is the author of NECESSARY SINS and OUT OF THE WOODS. Her work has appeared in the *Washington Post, Esquire, Harper's Bazaar* and *Elle*, among others. She lives in New York City.

Critical Praise

"An honest and powerful story, Lynn Darling writes about the politics of love, and of the newsroom, in a beautifully told tale of affairs of the heart, the intricacies of marriage, and the complexity of life in all its glorious imperfectness. **Necessary Sins** is a deeply moving testament to the mercurial nature of fate, romance, and ultimately, the human spirit."

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