Not Without You

by Harriet Evans



About the Book

Sophie Leigh?s real name is Sophie Sykes. But she hasn?t been called that for years, not since she became a movie star. Living in Hollywood, she can forget all about her old life in England and the tragedy she left behind. But in the process, she?s lost something of herself, too.

Eve Noel didn?t choose her new name. A Hollywood producer did. In fact, he makes all the decisions about her. What to wear, when to smile, who to love. A product of the 1950s, Eve has none of Sophie?s modern self-confidence, but she knows she must follow her heart. One day, she simply vanishes: No one knows where she went, or why?

As Sophie?s perfect-on-the-outside world begins to crumble, it seems her life might be linked to Eve?s. As past and present collide, Sophie must unravel the mystery around Eve?s disappearance to save them both --- but is she already too late?

Discussion Guide

1. The prologue begins with Rose telling Eve that elves have left gold coins in the stream, introducing the ideas of imagination and make believe from the very beginning of this story. Where else do you see these ideas threaded through in Eve?s life --- in her career choice, her romantic life, her later years? Do you see them echoed in Sophie?s life as well?

2. On the surface, Eve and Sophie have a lot in common --- their English heritage, their beauty, their talent, their glamorous careers, even their house. But there are differences, too --- in their families, in the romantic lives, in what motivates them. Do you think they?re more alike or more different? Did you identify more with Eve or with Sophie?

3. How does Eve?s relationship with her largely-absent parents affect her? What about Sophie, with her pushy stage mom, who gave up her own career for Sophie? Which one, in the end, had it better?

4. Setting plays an important role in the story, with the contrast between sunny, carefree California and the green, rainy English countryside especially pronounced. How do you see the setting affecting the action of the story? What other locations are used in the book, and how do they affect the scenes that take place there?

5. Sophie finds herself the subject of many ridiculous stories in the tabloids, from Armpitgate to her near-engagement to Patrick, whom she barely knows. How do you see the tabloids manipulating Sophie throughout the story? How do Sophie and the Hollywood machine manipulate them? How was it different in Eve?s day? In the end, is what?s true more important than what the public sees?

6. On the surface, some of the parts of the story set in Hollywood feel fun and glamorous, almost somewhat superficial, but they actually have a lot to say about the problems women in Hollywood --- and women everywhere --- have being taken seriously. Where else do you see the author hinting at the idea that women and men don?t always have a level playing field?

7. What does the book say about Hollywood?s focus on standards for women?s beauty? How does what happens to Eve and Sophie reflect this? How are the characters of Deena, Sara and Tina affected by it?

8. After Eve became famous, she admits she ?couldn?t remember who I was, what I was supposed to be.? (p. 192) Does her life in Hollywood cause this confusion? Is it something the studio makes her feel intentionally? Do you think this can be read as a judgment about Hollywood?

9. ?I felt as if, every time, I became Rose. I became myself, truly myself.? (p. 219) Throughout the story, Eve and her sister are confused for one another --- sometimes on accident, sometimes by their own choice. Eve even refers to Eve and Rose as the two parts of her personality. (p. 366) Why do you think Eve is so willing to be known as her sister? Do you see Eve and Rose?s relationship as sweet, or as something darker?

10. Eve spends much of the book hiding --- behind a false marriage to Gilbert, behind Rose, behind her letters to Don. What is she afraid of? In what ways does her Hollywood career cause this? What else adds to this? Is acting --- by its very nature, escaping reality --- in some ways the perfect career for her? Why or why not?

11. Conrad?s homosexuality is treated as a disease, while Rose?s epilepsy is seen as a mental disorder. Even Eve?s post-partum breakdown is treated with electric shock therapy, which causes her to lose parts of her memory. How have attitudes about these conditions changed? In what ways haven?t they? Are there other conditions or situations in the book that seem to be products of their time?

12. The studios in Eve?s time are shown to be struggling against the new technology of television, as well as from actors and directors --- including Gilbert --- putting together projects on their own without their help. They seem to be fighting to hold on to a dying system. How else do you see that theme echoed in the book? Do you see parallels to today?s entertainment culture?

13. ?I think I had it coming,? (p. 430) Sophie says of her attack. What does she mean by that? Is there any merit to her

claim? How does the attack change her? Do you think Sophie ends up better off after the attack? Why or why not?

14. Which real-life movie-stars did the characters remind you of? Did they have echoes of any real stars? Which old movies in particular did Eve?s story remind you of, if any?

15. ?What happened next? That?s what you always want to know at the end of a film, right? Do they live happily ever after?? (p. 460) Do you think Eve and Don live happily ever after? What about Sophie and Patrick? Do you think the ending is clear about what happens next for these characters? Why or why not? How does that affect your reading of the story?

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1. Pick up a couple of tabloid magazines and flip through them together. How are the actors portrayed? Before reading this book, how much of what was printed would you have believed? Has reading this book changed your impression of what the magazines print? Does it matter whether what?s printed is true or not?

2. There are several excellent biographies of William Shakespeare, including WILL IN THE WORLD by Stephen Greenblatt and SHAKESPEARE: The Biography by Peter Ackroyd. Read one of these, and watch *Shakespeare in Love* or a movie adaptation of one of his plays. Discuss the various ways in which Shakespeare?s work and life has been used by the movie industry as perennially fresh material. Think about how his plays have transferred to the big screen and what you feel has worked, and have enjoyed as entertainment, and what hasn?t.

3. While Eve?s movies are fictional, there are many wonderful films that Eve could have starred in and bring Eve?s world to life. Watch a movie from the late 1950s or early 1960s --- you might check out one starring Elizabeth Taylor, who beats out Eve for the Oscar in this story --- and discuss how it?s different from movies produced today and how you see echoes of this story in it.

Please contact Harriet either via her Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/harrietevansbooks or on Twitter @HarrietEvans if you and your book group would like to discuss anything further after you?ve read NOT WITHOUT YOU.

Author Bio

Harriet Evans is the internationally bestselling author of GOING HOME, A HOPELESS ROMANTIC, THE LOVE OF HER LIFE, I REMEMBER YOU, LOVE ALWAYS, HAPPILY EVER AFTER, NOT WITHOUT YOU and A PLACE FOR US. She lives in London.

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