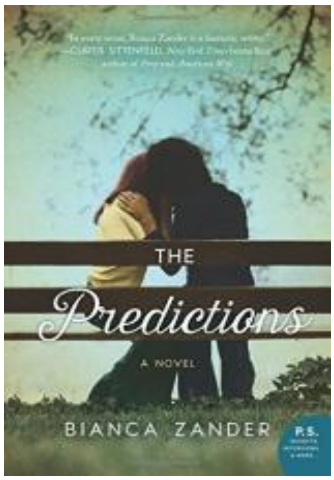
The Predictions

by Bianca Zander



About the Book

From the author of the acclaimed THE GIRL BELOW comes a stunning novel of one woman?s attempt to outrun the destiny that is predicted for her, moving from a remote New Zealand commune in the waning days of 1970s free-love experimentation to the heady music scene of 1980s London.

Gaialands, a bucolic vegan commune in the New Zealand wilderness, is the only home 15-year-old Poppy has ever known. It?s the epitome of 1970s counterculture --- a place of free love, hard work and high ideals?at least in theory. The reality is complicated and sometimes fraught, especially as its children reach adolescence. Poppy is drawn to handsome 16-year-old Lukas, who?s increasingly skeptical of Gaialands and the adults who shape its rules.

To help ?heal? the commune?s energy, new arrival Shakti harnesses her divination powers in a Predictions ceremony. All of Gaialands? teenagers receive a card outlining their futures. Poppy, predicted to find her true love overseas, joins Lukas when he follows his dream of starting a punk rock band first in Auckland and then on to London, where punk has given way 80s pop and hair metal. Struggling simply to survive as they navigate the city?s squats, pubs and burgeoning clubs, she and Lukas drift apart. Poppy finds a life that looks very like the one her prediction promised, but is it the one she truly wants? And if not, can she define her own happiness, even if it takes her in unanticipated directions?

THE PREDICTIONS is a mesmerizing, magical novel of fate, love, mistakes, and finding your place.

Discussion Guide

1. THE PREDICTIONS begins with the narrator?s assertion that at Gaialands she was raised ?to believe in freedom --- personal, societal, spiritual.? But this freedom is not always easily won. Can you think of some ways in which Gaialands is not a particularly ?free? place?

2. Have you known a person like Shakti in your life? What causes some people to be so influential and charismatic? Do you think Shakti was a positive or negative influence on the children?

3. Fritz?s disappearance is never resolved. What do you think happened to him and why?

4. Lukas and Poppy?s relationship has significant ups and downs. At times he seems extremely toxic but then he often redeems himself. Ultimately, do you think Lukas is a good fit for Poppy? Why or why not?

5. How could Poppy?s life have been different if she?d never received her Prediction? Can you think of a moment in your own life that ended up changing the course of things irrevocably?

6. Poppy?s impression of Gaialands when she returns with her own son is very different from that of her childhood. What are some of the most significant shifts in her feelings and opinions about the place and the way of life?

7. The novel?s narrative follows its characters through many years of fads, fashions and musical styles. How does the author use these changing trends to reflect the characters? actions and states of mind?

8. The author raises many interesting questions about fate and free will. Do you believe in fate? Why or why not? Can free will overcome destiny?

Author Bio

Bianca Zander is British-born but has lived in New Zealand for the past two decades. Her first novel, THE GIRL BELOW, was a finalist for the VCU Cabell First Novelist Award, and she is the recipient of the Creative New Zealand Louis Johnson New Writers' Bursary and the Grimshaw Sargeson Fellowship, recognizing her as one of New Zealand's eminent writers. She is a lecturer in creative writing at the Auckland University of Technology.

Critical Praise

?In THE PREDICTIONS Bianca Zander creates pure magic in a nostalgic tale of the ?70s and ?80s with a twist. Life on a commune might be all about free love and free will, but for Poppy and Lukas, this life creates difficulties after a startling announcement rocks their idyllic world. When an alluring mysterious visitor to the commune grants each of the children predictions for the future, and one of their own goes missing, Poppy and Lukas abandon the shelter of the commune and attempt to outrun their destinies by escaping into eighties heavy metal London. THE PREDICTIONS is a wild, exhilarating ride and Zander has created an otherworld where destiny and life collide with reality, where lust and love complicate and heal, and where fate and faith triumph.?

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