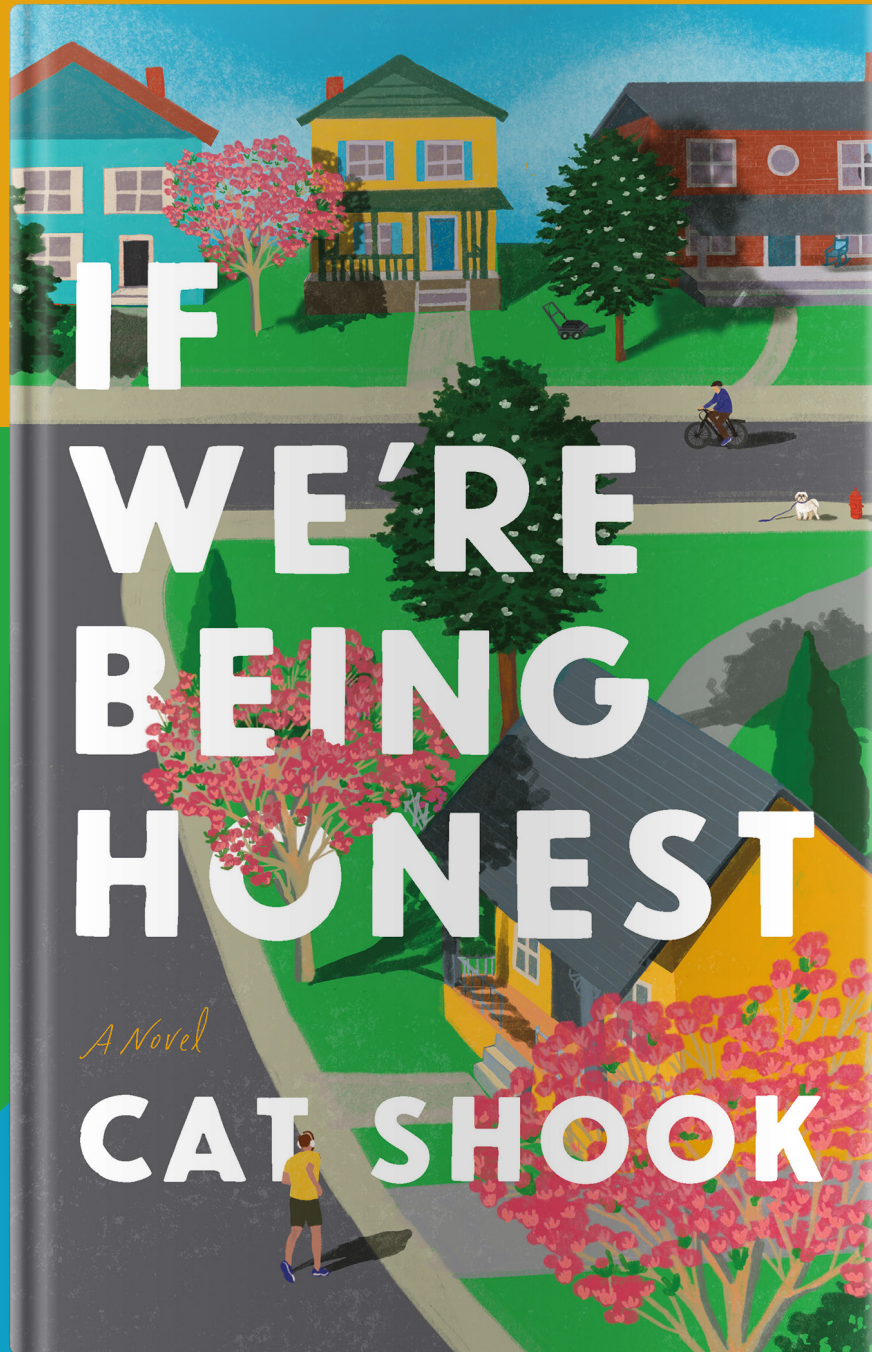


BOOK CLUB KIT

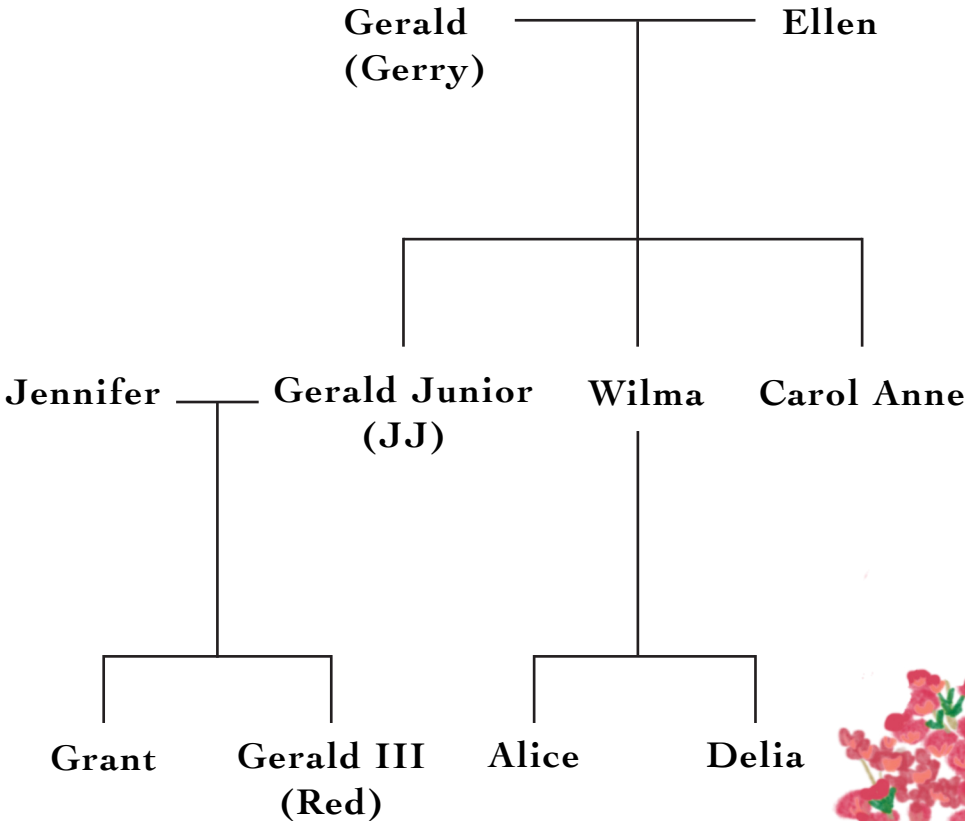


“An incredibly strong debut filled with family drama and complex characters. This novel is a book club dream that will leave readers counting the days until they can discuss it with friends!”

—MARY O'MALLEY, SKYLARK BOOKSHOP

FAMILY TREE

THE WILLIAMS FAMILY



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 In a big family, it can be as easy to feel like an outsider as to feel included and protected. Why is that? Which members of the Williams family felt included or excluded by their relatives? And did that change throughout the book?
- 2 Many members of the Williams clan face some type of infidelity, real or imagined, during the novel. How can faithfulness change and shift in a relationship? Is it possible to forgive someone who has been unfaithful?
- 3 Parental and familial expectations are another common thread in the novel. How do the characters face their family's expectations? Have things changed for any of the characters, like JJ or Red, following Gerry's death? Do you relate to feeling the weight of your family's expectations?
- 4 The Williams cousins idealized their grandparents' love. When they learn about Gerry's infidelity, it makes them question their own chance for a healthy relationship. Are any of the characters able to overcome this? How?
- 5 Quite a few characters are hiding secrets. When the first is revealed, it sets off a chain reaction. What impact did hiding these secrets have on the characters? Why were they each compelled to share the truth, and did it help?
- 6 Did you feel that the youngest generation was a little too self-involved? Do you think this was a commentary on the generation as a whole, or just this particular family?

Submitted by Galley Book Group (Bluffton, OH)

- 7 Which member of the Williams clan did you relate to the most?
- 8 If you were a member of the Williams family, which of your relatives would you go to for advice? Why?
- 9 Why do you think Ellen decided to plant the last magnolia tree?
- 10 What do you think happens to these characters after the book ends?

Submitted by Reading Between the Wines (Kure Beach, NC)

- 11 Who would you cast in the movie version of *If We're Being Honest*?



ELLEN'S PEACH COBBLER

Instructions

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Fill a saucepan with water. Boil whole peaches until skin loosens. Remove peaches from water and set aside to cool.

Melt butter and pour into a 13 x 9-inch baking dish.

In a bowl, combine flour, 1 cup sugar, baking powder, and salt. Add milk and stir. Pour batter into the baking dish.

Once peaches have cooled, peel and slice. Measure 4 cups of slices. Sprinkle with remaining 1 cup sugar and lemon juice. Pour peach mixture into the baking dish; do not stir. Sprinkle with cinnamon (optional).

Bake for 40 to 45 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm or chilled.

Ingredients

½ cup unsalted butter

1 cup all-purpose flour

2 cups sugar, divided

1 tbsp baking powder

Pinch of salt

1 cup milk

8 to 10 ripe peaches

1 tbsp lemon juice

Pinch of cinnamon
(optional)





AN INTERVIEW WITH CAT SHOOK

CAT SHOOK graduated from the University of Georgia in 2016 with degrees in Creative Writing and Mass Media Arts. Born and raised in Georgia, she now lives in Manhattan. *If We're Being Honest* is her first novel.

HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE IDEA FOR *IF WE'RE BEING HONEST*?

The novel started coming together because I could hear the characters having conversations with each other in my head. I asked myself who these people were, and then the story started taking shape from there.

THE NOVEL CENTERS AROUND THREE GENERATIONS OF THE WILLIAMS FAMILY, WHO HAVE GATHERED TO GRIEVE THE LOSS OF THEIR BELOVED PATRIARCH. WHO WAS YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER TO WRITE? AND WITH WHICH CHARACTER DID YOU FEEL THE MOST PERSONAL CONNECTION?

The most fun character to write was definitely Carol Anne, just because she's so absurd. I feel really connected to all of them, though, even Carol Anne. While none of the characters is based on anyone in my real life, I will say that I identify the most with Delia. We share a lot of the same flaws!

ALTHOUGH GRIEF AND LOSS ARE CENTRAL TO THE PLOT, WHAT OTHER THEMES DID YOU SET OUT TO EXPLORE THROUGH THE VARIOUS FAMILY MEMBERS' STORIES?

It's funny, because in writing the book, the only thing I was really interested in exploring was the characters. It was much more a process of discovering who they were than it was setting out to write a book about a larger theme. But when the first draft was finished, I realized I had written a book about infidelity; every character has their own brush with it in some way.

But I think the biggest theme is love, and the idea that love (romantic, familial, friendship) doesn't always look how you think it will, especially in relationships that have existed for a long time. But does that make it any less meaningful?

YOU WROTE THIS BOOK WHILE ALSO WORKING FULL-TIME AT A LITERARY AGENCY. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO FUTURE AUTHORS WHO AREN'T SURE WHERE TO START THE PROCESS?

My advice for writing a manuscript is to do whatever you need to do to hold yourself accountable to actually write. I try to steer clear of one-size-fits-all advice for that, because everyone has different lives, schedules, and motivating factors, but what I would say is find some way to incorporate accountability into your life. For me, I told a few close friends I was working on a book, one of whom was my roommate at the time. I wrote the majority of this book during lockdown, so that roommate would pointedly ask me every day if I had written, and I can't emphasize enough how much not wanting to tell him "no" helped me finish my first draft.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE READERS TAKE AWAY FROM *IF WE'RE BEING HONEST*?

It still blows my mind that I'm going to have readers! I will be so curious to hear what people take from it, and I am too nervous to tell anyone how to feel about it. But what I will say is that for me, the beating heart of this book is the idea that love doesn't always go how you think it's going to and it's not always going to fit into a traditional mold, but that does not lessen its value. Our ideas about love can be reframed, and there's beauty in that.



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BOOKS

If you decide to adopt *If We're Being Honest* for your book club, we would love to hear about it! Please let us know by emailing us at reader@celadonbooks.com or post on social media using the hashtags #CeladonBookClub and #IfWereBeingHonest.