



Mad Honey

By Jodi, Picoult

First published in 2022

Genre and Subject

Divorced women -- Fiction

Psychological fiction

Mother- son relationship

Beekeeping -- Fiction

Synopsis

Olivia McAfee knows what it feels like to start over. Her picture-perfect life—living in Boston, married to a brilliant cardiothoracic surgeon, raising a beautiful son, Asher—was upended when her husband revealed a darker side. She never imagined she would end up back in her sleepy New Hampshire hometown, living in the house she grew up in, and taking over her father's beekeeping business. Lily Campanello is familiar with do-overs, too. When she and her mom relocate to Adams, New Hampshire, for her final year of high school, they both hope it will be a fresh start. And for just a short while, these new beginnings are exactly what Olivia and Lily need. Their paths cross when Asher falls for the new girl in school, and Lily can't help but fall for him, too. With Ash, she feels happy for the first time. Yet at times, she wonders if she can trust him completely . . . Then one day, Olivia receives a phone call: Lily is dead, and Asher is being questioned by the police. Olivia is adamant that her son is innocent. But she would be lying if she didn't acknowledge the flashes of his father's temper in him, and as the case against him unfolds, she realises he's hidden more than he's shared with her.

Author Biography

Jodi Picoult is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of thirty novels, including *Mad Honey*, *Wish You Were Here*, *The Book of Two Ways*, *A Spark of Light*, *Small Great Things*, *Leaving Time*, and *My Sister's Keeper*, and, with daughter Samantha van Leer, two young adult novels, *Between the Lines* and *Off the Page*. She lives in New Hampshire with her husband.

Discussion Starters

1. What surprised you about Mad Honey? Did you have any emotional reactions? Discuss.
2. Both Olivia and Lily share a love for fun facts, especially about bees. What is the significance of having these bee facts in the book; is there one that particularly stood out to you?
3. Olivia's chapters move forward in time while Lily's move backward. How did this affect the story's narrative and the way information was revealed? Why do you think the authors specifically chose to focus the points of view on Olivia and Lily?
4. In many ways, Asher and Lily are two sides of the same coin. How does Asher's relationship with Braden (or lack thereof) mirror Lily's relationship with her own father and how does this contrast with the relationships they have with their mothers?
5. Do you believe someone who hits and abuses their partner can ever change? And if you were in Olivia's shoes, would you be worried about the potential cycle of abuse that could pass from parent to child? If so, what steps may you have tried to take to prevent this?
6. Did you agree or disagree with Olivia's decision to keep Braden's abuse a secret from Asher? Knowing what we know about the things Olivia and Asher hid from each other, does this ultimately do more to help or hurt Asher?
7. Do you believe that love between a parent and child can be unconditional? Are some actions, taken by either the parent or child, beyond redemption and deemed unforgivable? Discuss.
8. Was the volatility of Lily's relationship with Asher a red flag (a sign that a person will turn out to be—or is—a bad or problematic partner), or something that could be chalked up to a teenage relationship?
9. At one point Jordan snaps at Asher and says, "The truth has no place in a court of law, goddammit. . . . And since the prosecution's already painted you as an abuser and a liar, how good do you actually think your word is?" In what ways do the procedures of this trial—and the larger justice system—affect Asher and the other witnesses?
10. The court of public opinion impacts all the characters involved in the case, something we've seen continuously play out in contemporary society, especially with the popularity of social media and instant access to the news cycle. Do you think it's fair for casual observers to take sides and make assumptions about events they see and hear, and why do you think we, as a society, are so drawn to doing this?

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