

# Book Club Kit



BERKLEY

## Dear Reader,

I first fell in love with romance novels when I was thirty years old.

Only nine months prior, I had given birth to my first and only child, and postpartum, my mental health plummeted. My nervous system felt as raw as if it had been burnt and left exposed to dire weather, and I found myself no longer comforted by all the things I used to love—writing, cooking, baking, or watching films and television series.



Due to “baby brain,” I don’t remember the name of the first romance book I read. The details I do remember are that I had downloaded it onto my phone. I was in the middle of a cross-country trip from Florida to Seattle. I had taken a break from driving to nurse my son, and I opened this romance I had taken a random chance on. And I could not stop reading. When I looked up again, maybe a quarter of the way through the book, my son was fast asleep in his car seat, and it seemed the entire world looked a little warmer and brighter, as though the whole of it had been dipped in a sheen of gold.

I don’t know why it took me so long to discover the romance genre, but my suspicion is that my former ignorance was rooted in internalized misogyny. I wish I had known much earlier the gifts romance brings to its readers—the excitement and anticipation of watching characters become vulnerable and fall in love. The validation in a main female character discovering that she deserves emotional maturity and sexual generosity from her partner. And the comfort, especially to those of us with mental health struggles, in knowing that by the end of the book, there is always a Happily Ever After to savor.

After reading so much romance, it also became obvious to me that







there are far too few books by authors of color, which also means there are far too few love stories containing characters of color. I knew I wanted to play a small part in changing that when I began outlining my own romance manuscripts.

*Witch of Wild Things* is my first adult romance, and I am so proud of it. The book features Sage Flores, a Mexican American woman whose sister's ghost haunts her only when she cries, who is magically and fiercely connected to our living botanical ancestors, and who is forced into close proximity with Tennessee Reyes, a Dominican American man who broke her heart over a decade ago. The very man whom Sage probably (definitely) still loves.

There is so much of my own heart in this book. My background in learning how to decolonize landscaping, gardening, and land stewardship. My experiences with my own mental health struggles around grief. And, of course, my love for romance, shown in the sweet unfolding of Tenn and Sage's love, as tender as the bloom of a wild rose.

I hope this book brings readers so many things: A closer look at the perils of overdevelopment. A renewed connection to native plant landscaping. But most of all, I hope that once readers finish *Witch of Wild Things*, they look up and discover that the world has become a little warmer and brighter, as though the whole of it has been dipped in a sheen of gold. That another romance novel, once again, brings a little bit of healing to our world, just like these novels have done for me over and over again.

Wishing you so many Happily Ever Afters,

*Raquel Vasquez Gilliland*

# Discussion Questions

1

Sage and Tenn first met through AOL Instant Messenger when they were teenagers. How do you think Sage's internet anonymity helped shape their relationship back then? Did it bring them closer together or keep them further apart? Have you ever had an anonymous online friendship?

2

For most of the story, Teal is very resistant to patching up her relationship with Sage. Why do you think this is? Is Teal right to blame Sage for what happened to Sky? What could Teal and Sage have done differently to fix their relationship sooner?

3

Plant hunting is a centuries-old profession. Had you heard of it before reading *Witch of Wild Things*? How do you think the job suits Sage and Tenn?

4

When Sage first learns that Sky the ghost breaks all three rules of ghosthood according to her grandmother Sonya, did you suspect that maybe Sky wasn't a ghost after all? What were you anticipating when Sage finally discovers Sky in Cranberry Falls?





5

When Nadia sees Sage's basil plant, she tells Sage, "I thought you'd given it up." In return, Sage wants to ask, *How can you give up something that you're made of?* Do you think Sage, or any of the Flores women, could ever truly give up their gifts? Would their lives be easier or harder without their gifts?



6

When was the moment you think Sage fell for Tenn (again)? When do you think Tenn fell for Sage? What do you see in their future after the book ends?

7

Do you think Sage was right or wrong to make a deal in bad faith with Tenn?



8

Nadia says the gifts the Flores women have are a punishment. Do you agree with her? Why or why not? If you could pick from Sage's, Teal's, or Sky's gifts, which would you choose?



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