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Picton, ON K0K 2T0

www.invisiblepublishing.com

promotion@invisiblepublishing.com

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READING GUIDE

Erin Pepler's *Send Me Into the Woods Alone: Essays on Motherhood*

Dear Readers,

Thank you so much for choosing to read *Send Me Into The Woods Alone*. I am deeply grateful for your time and energy, particularly as I imagine many of you are parents who carefully ration both of these things. I've been there and I see you!

You may notice that these essays often refer specifically to motherhood rather than parenting. This is because I am a woman and a mother, and my perspective and experiences have been shaped by this identity. This is not to say these essays are exclusively for women or people who identify as mothers—they are for parents of any gender as well as prospective parents, and for anyone who cannot or chooses not to have children of their own but seeks insight in this strange, lovely world. Simply put: if you want to read this book, this book is for you.

The following questions may be helpful if you're reading *Send Me Into The Woods Alone* as a book club, which is my wildest dream. (Please tag me in your photos on social media so I can revel in the knowledge this happened.)

1. How has your experience of motherhood differed from your expectation?
2. Do you feel inhibited when speaking about certain elements of motherhood?
3. Have you felt your place and/or value in society shift since becoming a parent?
4. Has motherhood caused you to view your own parents differently?
5. Has becoming a parent made you feel more or less like yourself?

And, for discussions more specific to this book, you could ask:

1. Is there an essay in *Send Me Into The Woods Alone* that most resonated with you?
2. Has this book changed your perception of "balance," self-care or #WineMom culture?
3. Has the Internet made motherhood better or worse? How and why?
4. Did you relate to the author's experiences? If not, did you learn from them?

Motherhood has been the most joyful and rewarding chapter of my life, and more complex than anything I've ever lived through. It is good and hard and terrifying and magical but, like all parents, I'm just winging it. You can read all of the baby books in the world—there are some great ones—but motherhood isn't something you can ace by studying hard enough. You have live it every day. Resources and support certainly help, but mothers are not homogenous and neither are children. We're all learning as we go.

I wrote this book because I felt compelled to say the unsaid things about motherhood out loud (or at least, on paper) and to let moms know that they aren't alone. My hope is that these essays will make you think, feel and reflect. I hope you get a laugh or two out of them and at the end of the day, I hope you put this book down thinking *damn, this isn't easy, but I am a really good mom.*

Thank you again for reading,
Erin