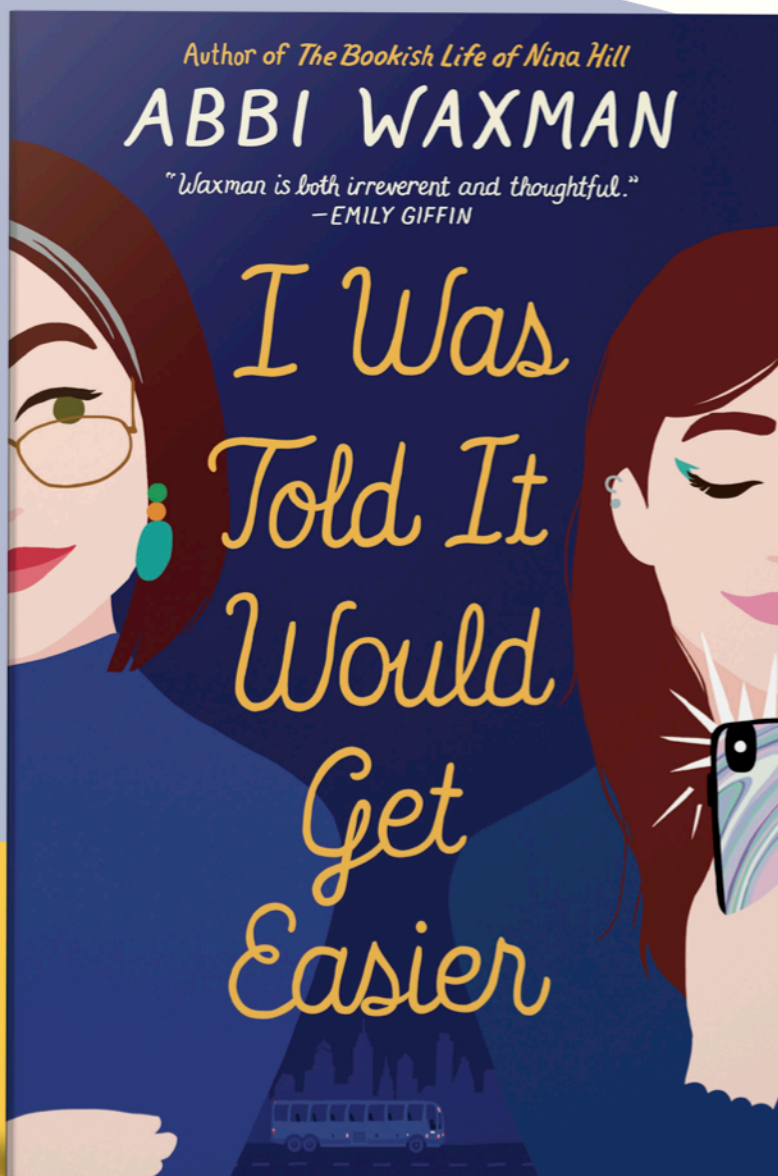


BOOK CLUB

Kit



DISCUSSION

Questions

1. At the beginning of the book, Jessica and Emily don't have a very good connection, not because they don't love each other but because they've slowly grown apart. What's the difference between experiencing that kind of relationship damage compared to, say, a sudden breakup?
2. Jessica is a single parent by choice and a working mother. What cultural assumptions are made about both of those groups, and how do those assumptions affect Jessica's opinion of herself?
3. Jessica talks about the differences between parenting younger children and teenagers. Do her experiences match up with your own?
4. Emily is a very independent young woman. What impact do you think Jessica's parenting had on Emily?
5. Emily often compares herself to other young people and finds herself wanting. What strengths do you see in her character that she may not be able to see in herself?
6. Emily talks about the pressure on young people to be perfect in every way. How has that pressure changed over time, and why does it feel particularly hard to be young these days?
7. Jessica talks about the pressure on parents to be seen as "good at" parenting, as reflected in their children's success. Is this something new, or has it always been an issue?
8. As the tour progresses, both Jessica and Emily learn new things about each other. How does travel impact the way we see other people?
9. Towards the end of the novel, Jessica reflects that maybe she'll be a better parent once Emily is older. How has your relationship with your parents changed over time and, if you have children, once you yourself became a parent?
10. Ultimately Emily and Jessica are both changed by this trip. Have you ever taken a trip that had an unexpected personal outcome?

Q&A with *Abbi Waxman*

***I Was Told It Would Get Easier* is your fourth book. Has your writing process changed from writing your first book, *The Garden of Small Beginnings*, to this one? Was there anything surprising from your writing journey of this book compared to the previous ones?**

The basic process hasn't changed, but it hasn't gotten any easier. I feel like the first book was the easiest in some ways, because no one was waiting for it. Now I have the encouragement of readers, which is awesome, but I also don't want to disappoint them.

How do you come up with your ideas? Are you influenced by real-life people, events, incidents, etc. to help frame some of the characters and the events that take place in the book?

No, although I do think of them as very real. I think about what they have in their bathroom cabinet. What they order in a restaurant, that kind of thing.



Photo by Leanna Creel

Many readers love your books, as your characters are people we wish were our real-life best friends. How do you write characters that are relatable without making them feel like caricatures or characters that could not exist in real life?

I think anyone can be charming for the length of a novel. Characters are easier to relate to because you follow them on a particular journey—there's no baggage. Even Mr. Darcy would get irritating after twenty years. Well, to his wife at least.

Your books always seem timely and really speak to not only what's going on in the world but also concerns that every generation faces. For example, *I Was Told It Would Get Easier* touches upon the universal challenge facing teenager Emily—how do you decide what you want to do when you're sixteen—and the challenges working mom Jessica faces—how to be a good mentor at work; how to raise a child in today's world. How do you know what challenges to focus on? Challenges that allow the characters to learn and grow?

Usually I just cheat and have them worry about what I worry about.

The humor in your book is priceless—readers often comment that they find themselves laughing out loud when they read a scene or line from your books. Does writing humorously differ from writing the plot/other scenes of the book? How does humor come to you?

It's not so much getting the humor in as it is keeping it out. I can't write very seriously; I've tried. This kind of writing is the only kind I can do.

Did you always know you wanted to be a writer? Was there anyone in your life who was your cheerleader/mentor/coach who encouraged this creative side of you?

Yes, although I wanted to be all kinds of things when I was a teenager. But all of them involved writing, and I started in advertising. My dad had an ad agency when I was little, and it always seemed very glamorous and fun. My mom wrote crime fiction my whole life, and she was the most encouraging person in the world. She took everything I wrote seriously and helped me. She taught me to trust my own voice, and also—and more importantly—to put my butt in a chair and work as much as possible.

What is writing advice you would give to aspiring writers?

Invest in comfortable clothing. Writing involves a lot of squirming in chairs.

DEAR *Abbi*

Surviving a Trip with Mom

DEAR ABBI: My mom is forcing me to go on this stupid college bus tour, but I don't even know if college is right for me. How do I survive this trip?

—EMILY IN LA

DEAR EMILY:

A. Put in earbuds and sing loudly when anyone asks you about your college plans.

B. Introduce your mom to the cute single dad on the trip so she's distracted while you make a run for it.

C. Make it an adventure! And talk to your mom about your college concerns. You'd be surprised how understanding moms can be.

D. Throw a temper tantrum to show your mom that you aren't ready for college.

DEAR ABBI: My teenage daughter is acting moody and distant. What should I do? —AT MY WITS' END

DEAR WITS' END:

A. Throw chocolate at her. It's probably low blood sugar.

B. Give her some space. She'll come around.

C. Take away her phone so she has no one to talk to but you.

D. Stay late at the office. See how *she* likes being ignored.

**Dear
Abbi**



DEAR ABBI: I want my daughter to take college applications seriously, but she isn't the least bit interested. What do I do? —SENIORITIS CITIZEN

DEAR SENIORITIS:

A. Take her to visit some college campuses. It may be that seeing college life makes the experience more real for her.

B. Plaster her walls with college applications as an inescapable reminder of her impending future.

C. Tell her you're taking her out to coffee, but actually take her to a prison to show her what happens to people who ignore their mothers.

D. Fill out the application yourself. No one will know.

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