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**STILL
ON
FIRE**
a memoir

THE READER'S GUIDE

For Book Clubs, Brave Conversations
& A Little Soul-Searching

RENEE LINNELL

YOU WERE BORN FREE.

Before You Begin



Still on Fire is a book about what happened after I escaped a cult and got my life back - only to discover that freedom wasn't something I could reclaim once and then be done with.

I had to keep choosing it.

I had to learn how to trust myself again.

How to listen to my body.

How to love without disappearing.

How to take risks.

How to stop caring quite so much what other people thought of me.

How to follow the strange little breadcrumbs life kept dropping in front of me.

Sometimes I got it right.

Sometimes I was spectacularly wrong.

But I kept going.

These questions aren't about whether you agree with me.

In fact, I hope sometimes you don't.

They're an invitation to use my stories to look at your own - to talk about the places you've been brave, the places you've played small, the things you believe, the things you once believed, and the things you might be ready to question.

Pour some wine.

Tell the truth.

Make each other laugh.

And if at some point someone says, "Oh fuck.

I do that," we're probably getting somewhere.

Love, Renee

QUESTION 01

How comfortable are you with not knowing?

Early in the book, Renee says, "Maybe 'I'm not sure' is the answer to all of it." She also admits that whenever she becomes certain, life seems to prove her wrong. Has there been something you once knew with absolute certainty that you later discovered you were wrong about? What did that experience do to you?

QUESTION 02

How do you tell the difference between intuition and rationalization?

Throughout *Still on Fire*, Renee repeatedly chooses experiences that other people might consider reckless, irresponsible, inappropriate - or just plain crazy. When do you think she is genuinely following her intuition, and when do you think she may simply be rationalizing something she wants to do? How do you tell the difference in your own life?

QUESTION 03

Where is the line between courage and recklessness?

The book repeatedly asks us to examine the difference between being safe and being fully alive. Do you think modern life places too high a value on safety and predictability? Has being "responsible" ever become an excuse for you not to do something you desperately wanted to do?

QUESTION 04

Who has the power to change how you feel about yourself?

Renee writes extensively about "giving away our power." One of her smallest examples happens when an attractive stranger sits beside her on an airplane and she suddenly starts wondering how she looks and what he thinks of her. Whose approval makes you feel worthy? Whose disapproval can make you smaller? Why do you think you've given that person that power?

QUESTION 05

What did the book make you notice about women, desire, and permission?

Still on Fire contains a lot of sex, desire, attraction, bodies, age differences and unconventional relationships - and Renee rarely apologizes for any of it. Did anything about the way she writes about female sexuality make you uncomfortable? Did anything make you feel liberated? Do you think women are still judged differently from men for openly wanting sex, pleasure, adventure, or younger partners?

QUESTION 06

Have you ever discovered that you were the common denominator?

Renee eventually recognizes that some of her romantic patterns aren't really about the men at all. She looks back at repeatedly criticizing partners and realizes that changing partners hadn't changed the pattern; something inside her kept coming with her. Have you ever blamed a person or circumstance for something only to discover later that you were carrying the pattern? What did you do once you saw it?

QUESTION 07

Can a sign be meaningful - and still be misunderstood?

Synchronicity runs throughout the memoir. Renee interprets coincidences, chance encounters, numbers, and unexpected events as evidence of divine choreography. By the end, Holden appears immediately after she stops searching for a man - and his hotel room is 444, a number she associates deeply with her father and divine reassurance. Do you believe coincidences can carry meaning? Have you experienced one that felt impossible to dismiss? And can our desire for something to be a "sign" affect what we think the sign means?

QUESTION 08

Can we find meaning in suffering without minimizing what happened?

Renee argues that changing the meaning we assign to painful experiences can change our relationship to them. At times she takes that belief very far, including her belief that souls may choose difficult experiences before incarnation. Is there a difference between choosing what happens to us and choosing what we do with what happened? Where do you draw that line?

QUESTION 09

What would "full-blown alien" look like in your life?

Near the end of the book, Renee decides to stop trying to fit in, stop people-pleasing, write what she wants, dress how she wants, and become willing to be an outcast. What part of yourself do you edit, soften, hide, or make more acceptable so other people will be comfortable with you?

QUESTION 10

Without knowing what comes next, what do you predict for Renee and Holden?

Still on Fire ends with Renee believing she has become whole enough to recognize and receive the relationship she has been waiting for. Yet one of the last lessons before Holden appears is about how dangerous it can be to lose ourselves in relationships - to change who we are in order to be loved until we can barely find our way back. What, if anything, worries you?

Take It Home

REFLECTION 01

Where in your life are you waiting for permission?

What do you already want, know, or feel - but keep looking outside yourself for someone to validate?

REFLECTION 02

Whose opinion can still make you smaller?

Whose approval makes you feel worthy? Whose disapproval can ruin your day? What would change if you stopped allowing that person to decide who you are?

Keep Going

REFLECTION 03

What are you calling "being responsible" that might actually be fear?

Is there something you've wanted to do for years that you keep postponing until you're thinner, richer, less busy, partnered, retired, healed, certain - or ready?

REFLECTION 04

What part of you have you made more acceptable in order to belong?

What would full-blown-alien you wear, say, write, create, try, leave, begin - or stop apologizing for?

Keep Going

REFLECTION 05

If you stopped searching for the thing you believe is missing, what might you finally notice is already here?

What love, companionship, beauty, freedom, abundance, or aliveness is already surrounding you while your attention is fixed somewhere else?

ONE LAST QUESTION

**What would you do if you
weren't afraid of getting it
wrong?**



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