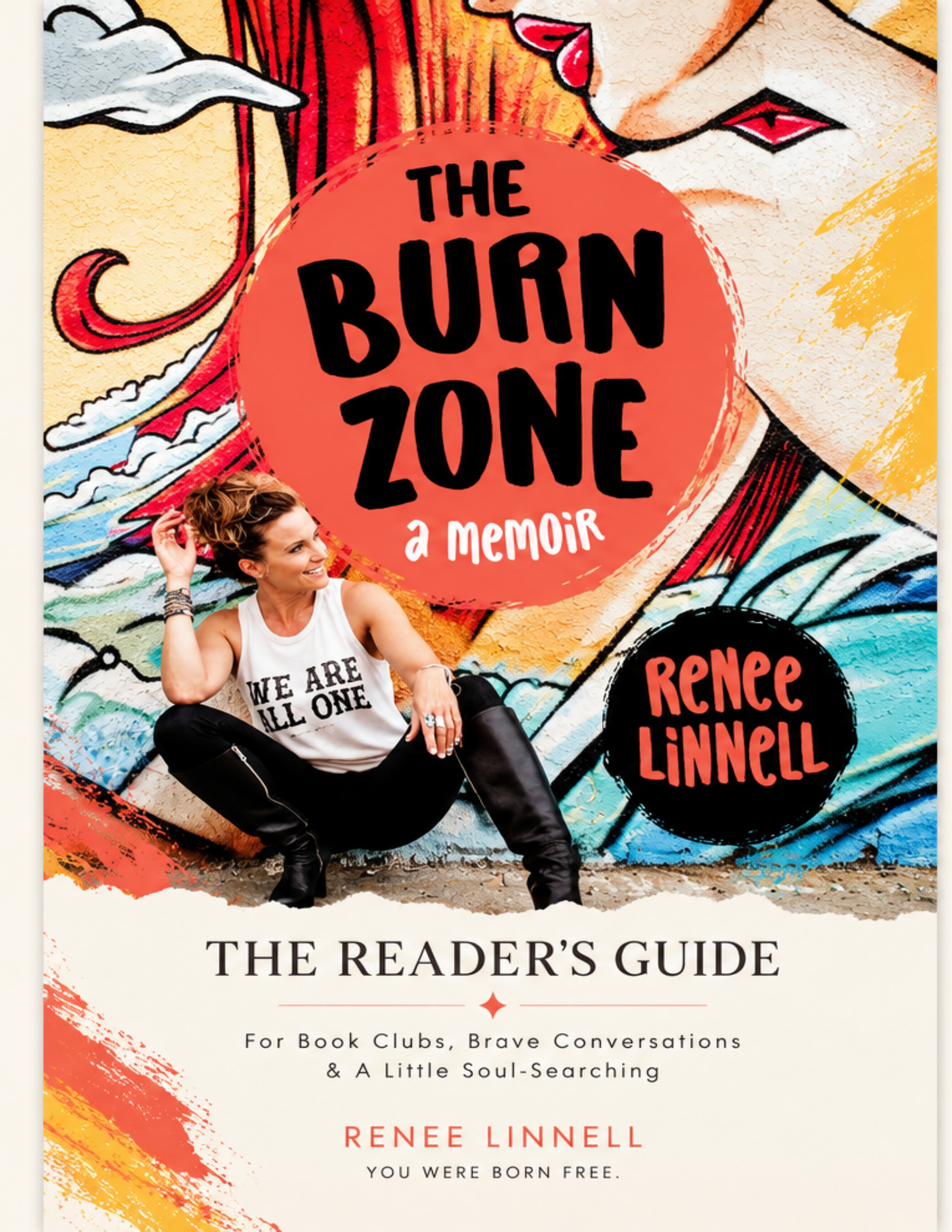




THE BURN ZONE

a memoir

RENEE
LINNELL

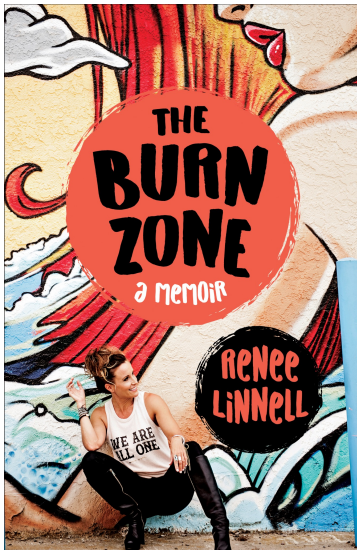
THE READER'S GUIDE

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

RENEE LINNELL

YOU WERE BORN FREE.

Before You Begin



The Burn Zone is a book about how I went looking for God and, somewhere along the way, lost myself.

I thought I was becoming freer.

Wiser.

More spiritual.

More evolved.

I did not realize how quietly freedom can disappear when you stop trusting your own knowing and begin believing someone else knows you better than you know yourself.

That is why I don't think this is only a book about cults.

It is about belonging.

Approval.

Love.

Fear.

The longing to be chosen.

The temptation to hand our power to someone who seems more certain than we are.

And the strange ways we can abandon ourselves while believing we are becoming better versions of ourselves.

These questions are not meant to turn your book club into a therapy session.

(Although after enough wine, who knows.) They're an invitation to talk about where we trust ourselves, where we don't, what makes us vulnerable to giving our power away - and what it takes to get it back.

Pour some wine.

Tell the truth.

Be kind to each other.

And maybe ask the question I wish more people asked when they read this story: Could this have happened to me?

Love, Renee

QUESTION 01

Could this have happened to you?

One of the most unsettling things about The Burn Zone is how gradually Renee loses her footing. She is not looking to surrender her life; she is looking for truth, growth, belonging, and God. At what point did you first see danger that she could not yet see? What made the progression believable to you - and where, if anywhere, did you recognize yourself?

QUESTION 02

When does the desire to grow become self-abandonment?

Renee is repeatedly told that resistance is ego, that discomfort means she needs to change, and that surrender is proof of spiritual progress. Have you ever pushed past your own instincts because you believed becoming 'better' required it? How can we tell the difference between genuine growth and abandoning ourselves?

QUESTION 03

Why is belonging so powerful?

As the sangha becomes Renee's world, old friendships and family relationships fall away and the people inside the group become the ones who understand her. Why do you think belonging can make us overlook things we would otherwise question? Have you ever stayed in a friendship, relationship, workplace, community, or belief system partly because leaving meant losing your tribe?

QUESTION 04

What happens when someone else becomes the authority on your inner truth?

Lakshmi and Vishnu increasingly define what Renee's feelings mean: fear becomes occult attack, resistance becomes ego, attraction becomes dharma, and doubt becomes spiritual failure. Where do you see the biggest transfer of authority in the book? What happens to a person when someone else is allowed to interpret her own inner experience for her?

QUESTION 05

Can something feel sacred and still be harmful?

Renee describes genuine beauty, love, mystical experiences, and moments of extraordinary connection inside the same world that later harmed her. Does the presence of something real or beautiful make it harder to recognize manipulation? Have you ever struggled to leave something because the good parts were genuinely good?

QUESTION 06

What did the book make you notice about apology, affection, and power?

Vishnu can rage, demean, demand obedience - and then send roses, cry, apologize, profess fierce love, and promise to change. How did those reversals affect the way you understood Renee's attachment to him? Why can tenderness after cruelty be so confusing?

QUESTION 07

Is forgiveness the same thing as excusing what happened?

During recovery, Renee works toward forgiving Lakshmi, Vishnu, Hiroto, and eventually herself while still naming the damage they caused. What does forgiveness mean to you? Can we release hatred without minimizing harm, restoring access, or pretending the past was acceptable?

QUESTION 08

How do you learn to trust yourself after your intuition has been dismantled?

By the time Renee leaves, she no longer knows what to believe, whom to trust, or even who she is. Her recovery is not simply about escaping the group; it is about rebuilding an internal compass. What helped her do that? What helps any of us hear our own knowing again after years of overriding it?

QUESTION 09

Do we heal by becoming who we were before - or by becoming more whole?

Renee initially longs to resurrect the free-spirited woman she was before the cult. By the end, she describes herself as both the quiet monk and the wild, sexy rule-breaker. What do you think the book says about healing? Is the goal to get the old self back, or to integrate every self that survived the journey?

QUESTION 10

What does freedom actually require?

The Burn Zone begins with the idea that we build false selves in order to be accepted and ends with Renee claiming all of herself - unashamed, unafraid, and free. After reading the book, what do you think freedom means? Is it something we escape into, something someone can give us, or something we practice by refusing to abandon ourselves?

Take It Home

REFLECTION 01

Where in your life have you overridden a quiet inner 'no' because someone else seemed to know better?

Think beyond spiritual teachers. A partner, parent, doctor, boss, friend, community, expert, or even the loudest voice in the room can become more authoritative than our own knowing.

REFLECTION 02

What have you changed, hidden, stopped doing, or given up in order to belong?

Which pieces of you became inconvenient, embarrassing, too much, not enough, or somehow unacceptable once you entered a certain relationship or world?

Keep Going

REFLECTION 03

Who have you allowed to become an authority on who you are?

Whose praise can make you soar? Whose criticism can make you question yourself? What would it look like to take that authority back?

REFLECTION 04

What truth do you already know - but keep asking someone else to validate?

Where are you still gathering opinions, signs, permission, reassurance, or proof because trusting your own answer feels too risky?

Keep Going

REFLECTION 05

What part of yourself are you ready to welcome home?

Not fix. Not improve. Not make more acceptable. What part of you is simply waiting to be remembered, reclaimed, forgiven, or loved?

ONE LAST QUESTION

**What part of yourself are
you ready to take back?**



YOU WERE BORN FREE.

reneelinnell.com