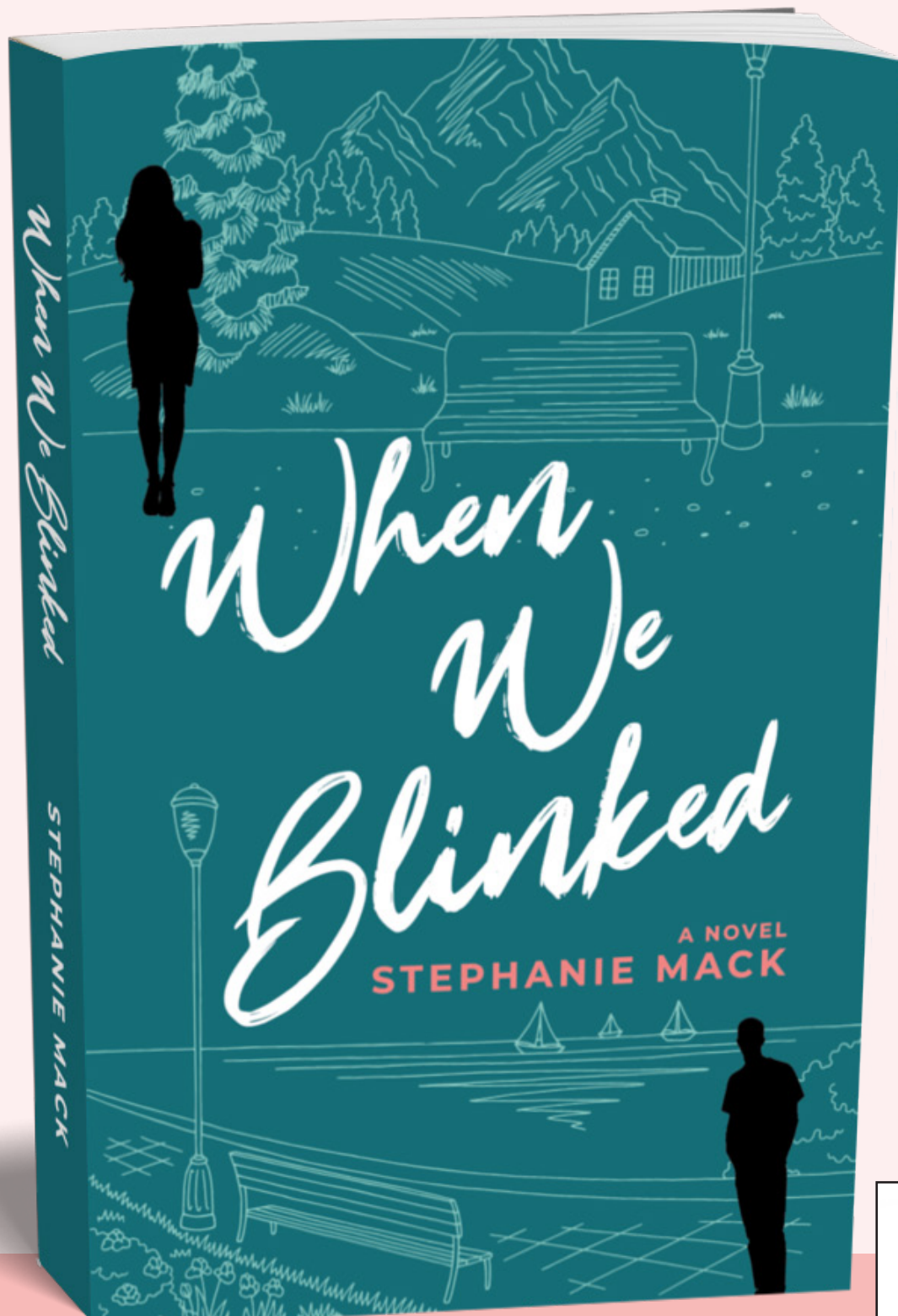
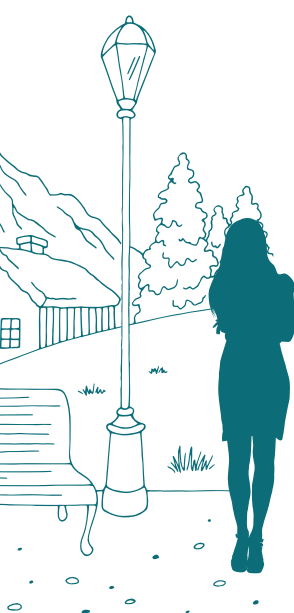


| BOOK CLUB KIT |



sm.



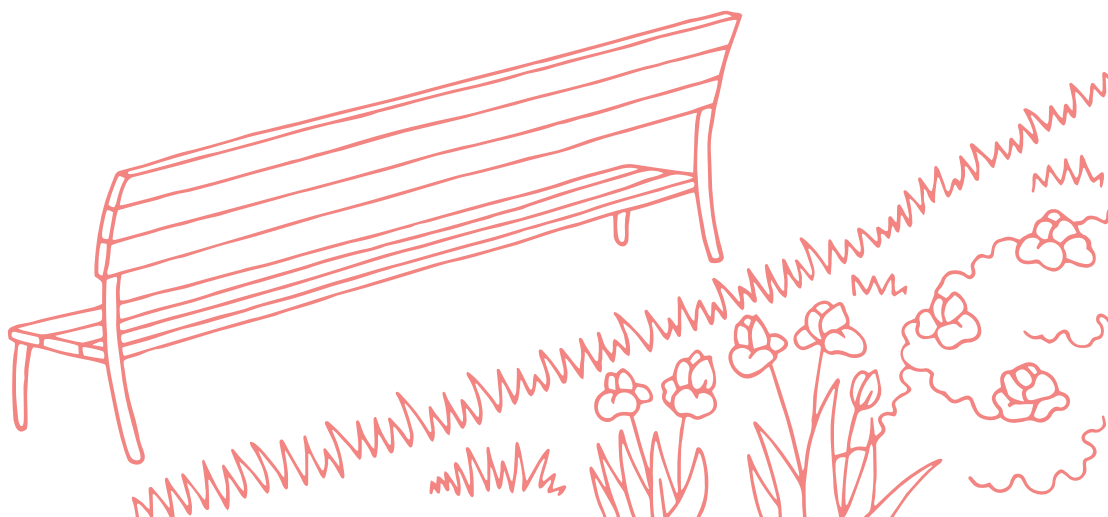
When *We Blink*ed is a modern-day romantic story with an unforgettable plot and a lovable cast of characters. The book also explores a number of deeply human issues such as marriage, divorce, parenting, infertility, mental health, addiction, and more. This study guide includes discussion questions, tips for hosting a book club, and, as a bonus, a list of local Orange County spots featured throughout the story. The suggested topics and questions are intended to spark conversation, inspire your group, and encourage reflection about your own journey. We hope that these elements bring the novel to life even more and connect you to friends, new and old, in a fun and meaningful way.

Enjoy!



TOPICS & QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 At its heart, *When We Blink*ed is the story of a marriage lost and restored—of a couple that might have seemed “perfect” on the outside but was actually crumbling and hurting behind the white picket fence. Did you find Sera and Connor’s relationship and struggles to be relatable and realistic? How so or why not?
- 2 What is your interpretation of the book’s title? Why do you think the author chose it and what does it mean to you?
- 3 Would you ever use a dating app that didn’t let you see a picture of the other person? If so, what kind of questions would you want to ask your potential match, and how do you think their answers (and yours!) might be different because of the absence of the pressure to look visually attractive? Do you think that looks should play an important part in relationships? Why or why not?



4

Piper Maddock (fun fact!) was based very loosely on Whitney Wolfe Herd, CEO and founder of Bumble, the female-focused dating app she launched in 2014 at age twenty-five. What did you make of Piper's success and her motivations for creating Blinde? What is your take on "swipe culture" and its impact on society and modern dating? Do you think an app like Blinde could succeed?

5

Location is a major element of Sera and Connor's story. Sera and Connor find themselves (and their moods) influenced by their surroundings—from the bright sunshine of southern California, to the familiar warmth of their comfortable homes, to the chilly beauty of Wyoming. How might Sera and Connor's story play out differently in a different setting—say in an economically disadvantaged rural town, a suburb in the Midwest, or in a more tightly packed urban cityscape? How do you find your own location influencing *your* life and relationships? Which settings or atmospheric moments in the book stood out to you?

6

Even after their divorce, Connor and Sera share a cooperative co-parenting relationship. Do you think this kind of peaceful cooperation is typical of divorced parents? What do you think it is about their relationship that let them navigate this new terrain successfully? How do you think their co-parenting relationship might have changed if either of them had ended up in a romantic relationship with someone new?



Sera and Beckham share a sincere coworking friendship with years of history—but nothing between them has ever happened physically or romantically. They share a strong mutual respect for each other, despite their occasional brother-sister squabbling and annoyances. Do you think it is realistic or unrealistic for them to have only ever been platonic friends?


7

For many Americans, watching pornography has become as normal as watching a sitcom, as detailed in the statistics in Chapter 18. In Sera and Connor's relationship, Connor's addiction to porn was a major issue. Do you personally think porn is a form of infidelity and betrayal? Do you think it is similar to other addicting substances, like alcohol or nicotine? Why or why not?

8

When Teagan asks Sera for marriage advice, Sera says that couples need to: 1) stay connected ("*really talk*"), 2) let each other see all of themselves, good and bad, and 3) forgive. What do you think of her advice? What advice would *you* add?

9



10 | Therapy is a big part of Sera and Connor's journey—and it continues to be, even after they reconcile. How do you think their second-chance love story would have been different without their therapists? Do you think therapy was more important for their individual mental health or for their relational health together? (Or do you think those two can't be separated and, if so, why not?)

11 | Beckham and Connor both take major steps in their faith journeys—Beckham begins to find faith, and Connor's faith deepens as a result of his experience in the Renegade group hosted by a local church. Compare Connor's moment by the church's lake (metaphorically throwing his "sin" into the water, to sink and be covered by Jesus' grace) to Beckham's experience of finding strength in the midst of his grief as he attends church with Sam. How do their journeys mirror each other? How do they differ? Do you think Beckham is still missing something? If so, what is it and do you think he'll eventually find it? What do you think of Sam and Beckham marrying, despite not sharing each other's beliefs?

12 | Sera is able to make a relatively good transition from being a stay-at-home-mom to once again being part of the work force, yet this transition still causes her some stress and guilt—and in our culture, many women seem to struggle against similar guilt, no matter what their work and parenting choices are. Is this a struggle you have faced? Do you personally encounter a divide between working and stay-at-home moms, like the one Sera muses about during Teagan's bachelorette party weekend?

13 | Divorce is rarely a decision made lightly. What do you think of Connor and Sera reversing their divorce and getting remarried? What kinds of healing, change, and repentance do you think might be necessary for a relationship with their history to succeed? Where do you see Sera and Connor in five years? In ten?

14 | Sera had the chance to start a relationship with a very rich, very handsome, very charming younger man, and yet chose not to. What do you think of her decision? Would you have made the same one? Why or why not?

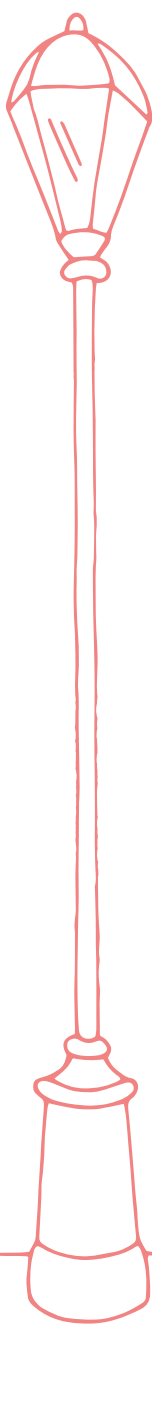
15 | By hiding his identity, Connor had a second chance at building a romantic relationship with Sera. Think of your own relationships: what would you do differently in them if you got to start from scratch? Would you take the chance if it were offered to you? What difference would it make if you could only restart them by being sneaky (like Connor) versus if you could restart them with all parties aware of what was going on?

16

Think about the different female relationships in this book. How do the women support each other cross-generationally? (Think of Sera and her mother, Sera and her daughter, Sera and her young intern.) How do Sera and her friends support each other? Do you imagine Sera was as good at supporting Connor, when they were married, as she was at supporting and listening to her friends? Connor is presented as a more solitary person than Sera; do you think this had an effect on the way he was able to contribute to their marriage?

17

Sera is very protective of her daughter. How much of this do you think is due to Coco's own needs, and how much due to Sera's personality? How do you think Sera's parenting style will change once she has more than one child? (Or do you think it will?) What are the strengths and weaknesses of Sera and Connor's parenting styles?



Sera and Connor struggled to have more children. How do you think society views the kinds of losses they suffered? Have you ever had to deal with a grief that was mostly hidden from those around you? How was it different than dealing with the more public griefs you've suffered?

18

Sera had a personally and spiritually enlightening moment in the middle of an exercise class—almost as if the action of her body was what finally brought freedom to her mind and her heart. Have you ever experienced a similar moment of mind-body connection? How much of what we know as our “self” resides in our bodies? How do you find your experience of your body influencing your emotions and thoughts?

19

Think about the Epilogue and where the characters ended up: Sera and Connor reunited, Graham and Piper with their burgeoning romance, Sam and Beckham getting married, Sage with her new clothing line. Were you satisfied with the ending? Is there anything more you would want to see in a sequel to *When We Blink*? Or in a spin-off following any of the characters besides Sera and Connor?

20

TIPS FOR HOSTING A BOOK CLUB

sm.

HAVE A PLAN Hopefully this Book Club Kit comes in handy for helping you plan a successful evening (or morning, or afternoon)! Consider having an agenda for the gathering so that all ground is covered, and the conversation is maximized. One idea is to write down the above questions, cut them into strips, and put them into a bowl. Pass it around the circle. Take turns reading the questions, and have whoever picked the question answer it first! The discussion can flow from there.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FOOD Everything's better with treats, right? If there's a memorable food or beverage from the book, it's always fun to consider serving it to the group. For instance, grilled artichokes, crème brûlée, and a lavish charcuterie all make a cameo in *When We Blinked*. Set the mood with just the right food!

LISTEN AND LEARN The beautiful purpose of book clubs is to share thoughts and glean wisdom from different perspectives. The most interesting book club sessions, in fact, are usually when members have wildly different opinions and insights on the same piece of work. Embrace the diversity of opinions within your circle. Be gracious, listen well, and don't take anything personally.

REACH OUT TO THE AUTHOR BEFOREHAND This might not always be possible or practical, but you'll find it's often happily welcomed! Authors are mere human beings, and generally thrilled to have groups of people discussing their books. Depending on their fame level and availability, of course, many will respond to a kind, professional email or direct message. You might be surprised which authors are even willing to send you a quick video, answer specific questions, or say hi to your group via Zoom. It's worth a try! There's nothing to lose by asking. (And many authors even have directions for scheduling a book-club drop-in right there on their websites, making it even easier!)

END THE SESSION BY SHARING NEW RECOMMENDATIONS A room filled with book lovers? Yes, please! These groups are typically brimming with exciting new recommendations for not only books, but TV shows, movies, podcasts, and other timely pop-culture fun. It's a great way to close out the night and select the group's book for next time.



ORANGE COUNTY HOT SPOTS

sm.

Calling all locals and tourists! Did you recognize any of these OC establishments sprinkled throughout When We Blinked? Whether thinly veiled or mentioned outright, described verbatim or brushed with fiction, each of these places is special to Stephanie Mack and provided the inspiration for a memorable scene. Enjoy these insider details on how to get the most from their magic.

Houston's



Bonus trivia: Stephanie worked here as a hostess during graduate school! Her go-to menu items remain the Grilled Artichokes (when in season!), the Spinach & Artichoke Dip, and the Thai Steak & Noodle Salad. Don't forget to order the Key Lime Pie!

Puesto



Mexican Artisan Kitchen & Bar

Founded by a first-generation Mexican American family with a fascination for local cuisine, Puesto infuses authenticity into every one of its taco creations. Insanely unique and wildly good, they range from braised short rib and filet mignon to lobster and seasonal mushroom. Their ceviche varieties are also divine!

Mariners Café

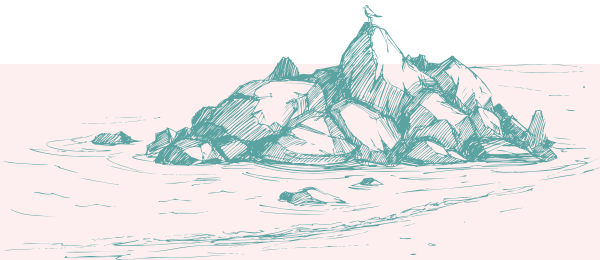


No one does "church café" quite like Mariners Irvine! The entire campus, in fact, is a gorgeous and tranquil sanctuary. Grab a chai latte and explore the property, from the baptismal pool and impressive bookstore to the traditional chapel and outdoor playground for little ones.

Water Grill



The rustic nautical glamour of Water Grill is second to none! Even more, the food is out of this world. Their Wild Spanish Octopus and Caramel Bread Pudding are two of Stephanie's personal favorites.



Montage

Laguna Beach



Gorgeously sprawled across the bluffs of Laguna Beach, the Montage is world-renowned for its 30 acres of seaside luxury and unrivaled views of the Pacific. Even better? You are free to roam the grounds with no reservation! Pack a picnic and perch on the cliffs to soak in some of the most stunning sights in all of California.