

Nothing to See Here

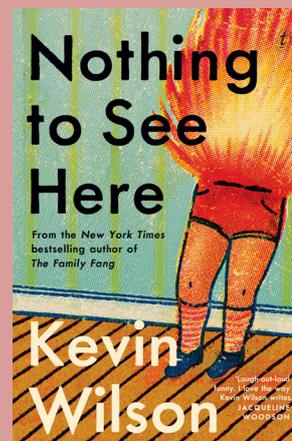


Kevin Wilson

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PRAISE FOR *NOTHING TO SEE HERE*

'Wilson captures the wrenching emotions of caring for children in this exceptional, and exceptionally hilarious, novel.'

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

'Marries the fantastic with the domestic.'

MILLIONS

ABOUT KEVIN WILSON

Kevin Wilson is the author of the collections *Tunneling to the Center of the Earth*, which received an Alex Award from the American Library Association and the Shirley Jackson Award, and *Baby, You're Gonna Be Mine*, as well as two novels: *The Family Fang* and *Perfect Little World*. He lives with his family in Sewanee, Tennessee, where he is an associate professor in the English department at the University of the South.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Lillian and Madison were unlikely roommates and yet inseparable friends at their elite boarding school. Then Lillian had to leave the school unexpectedly in the wake of a scandal and they've barely spoken since. Until now, when Lillian gets a letter from Madison pleading for her help.

Madison's twin stepkids are moving in with her family and she wants Lillian to be their carer. However, there's a catch: the twins spontaneously combust when they get agitated, flames igniting from their skin in a startling but beautiful way. Lillian is convinced Madison is pulling her leg, but it's the truth.

Thinking of her dead-end life at home, Lillian figures she has nothing to lose. Over the course of one humid, demanding summer, Lillian and the twins learn to trust

each other—and stay cool—while also staying out of the way of Madison's buttoned-up politician husband. Surprised by her own ingenuity yet unused to the intense feelings of protectiveness she feels for them, Lillian ultimately begins to accept that she needs these strange children as much as they need her. Couldn't this be the start of the amazing life she'd always hoped for?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The twins in *Nothing to See Here* spontaneously combust when they get agitated. The fire they generate can burn others, but leaves them unharmed. What might the nature of this condition represent? Did your perception of the condition change at all throughout the book? Did you become more used to it? Less?
2. This novel offers a unique perspective on the complexities of love and what it means to look beyond a person's differences. What sort of preconceived notions does Lillian bring to this job? How do Bess and Roland challenge those notions?
3. Lillian works hard to establish and maintain a bond with the twins. What is it about Lillian that makes her uniquely equipped for this job? Why is she able to connect with them while others have failed?
4. Throughout the book, many characters look for ways to control or cure the twins' condition. Think about the variety of methods put forward. What did you think of each method? What might the methods suggested reveal about each person who suggested them?
5. At the end of chapter three, Lillian expresses surprise that the children's hair remains unscinged after they burst into flames: "I don't know why, with these demon children bursting into flames right in front of me, their bad haircuts remaining intact was

the magic that fully amazed me, but that's how it works, I think. The big thing is so ridiculous that you absorb only the smaller miracles." Do you relate to this sentiment? What other 'smaller miracles' are present in the story?

6. The novel offers examples of how class dynamics can shape an individual's experience: Lillian and Madison's differing experiences at their elite high school, for instance, or Lillian's early days as an employee on the Roberts estate alongside Carl and Mary. How does wealth and privilege shape the story? Which characters most feel the impact of this?
7. How does Lillian's dark sense of humor amplify the book's themes of love, acceptance, and parenting? Did you enjoy the use of humor throughout the novel? What did it tell you about Lillian's character?
8. Lillian makes a big life change at the end of the novel. What did you think about her journey from Madison's high school roommate to eventual caretaker to her step-kids? What do you think she ultimately saw in Roland and Bess that led her to make such a change?
9. Madison and Lillian have a complicated relationship that veers from deep affection to intense rivalry to bitter resentment to uneasy allies. Do you think they're foils for one another or something else? How does their competitive edge play into their relationship? And do you think their relationship will live on after the events of the novel?
10. *Nothing to See Here* explores different representations of family structure and dynamic. How do the family units presented at the beginning of the book evolve and change? What does Lillian value in family? Which characters share those values, and which characters differ?