

How I Came to Sparkle Again

KAYA McLAREN

1. At the beginning of the book, Jill returns to her hometown of Sparkle, Colorado, after suffering a devastating loss and heartbreak. Returning to the location of one's childhood can have a powerful impact on a person—for better or for worse. How does returning to your hometown affect you? Is it true what they say, that “you can never go home”?
2. How is the ski town setting important to the characters' journeys? Do you think the story would have been dramatically different if the setting were the beach or a large city?
3. Each chapter begins with a snow report. Why do you think the author includes these? How do you think they add to the mood of each chapter, given the importance of snow and weather in a ski town such as Sparkle?
4. Why do you think that the men from The Kennel played a significant role in Jill's transformation? What is it about their personalities that made them effective friends for Jill at that moment?
5. Like Kaya McLaren's other books, this story is filled with second chances. List a few. Who do you think should have received a second chance but didn't?
6. Why do you think Uncle Howard prescribed Hope for the Flowers to his young pupils—and how do you think the book would have resonated differently with Cassie than with a young Jill? What things did their childhoods have in common?
7. In the book, Cassie believes her mother is communicating with her through the heart-shaped rocks and other heart-shaped things she finds. Have you ever felt that or wondered whether a loved one who had passed away was trying to communicate with you?

8. Throughout the book, Cassie searches for heart-shaped rocks as a way to feel connected to her late mother. In what rituals have you partaken to honor or remember someone? What is the significance of Cassie sharing this ritual with Jill at the end of the book?
9. Jill and Mike begin to fall in love even as he and Cassie are still learning to live without Kate. What do you think of their choices and would you have made the same—or different—choices in their shoes?
10. Would Cassie be the same person at the end of the book if she had not met Mauricio? Why or why not?
11. Discuss the ways in which characters bond and develop over food. Did any of those moments remind you of something from your own life?



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