



A Penny on the Tracks

by Alicia Joseph

ISBN 9781945805325

“When a train runs over a penny, the penny changes form, but it can still be a penny if I want it to be. Or, I can make it be something else.”

Lyssa and her best friend Abbey discover a hideout near the train tracks and spend the summer before sixth grade hanging out and finding freedom from issues at home. Their childhood innocence shatters when the hideout becomes the scene of a tragic death.

As they’re about to graduate from high school, Abbey’s family life spirals out of control while Lyssa is feeling guilty for deceiving Abbey about her sexuality. After another tragic loss, Lyssa finds out that a penny on the track is sometimes a huge price to pay for the truth.

From the author

My inspiration for writing this book came from my own experiences with my childhood best friend. Like the characters in this book, we discovered a place we called our “Hideout” and spent time there, smashing pennies on railroad tracks and doing other things

Discussion Questions

1. If you were Lyssa, do you think you would have seen the early signs that Abbey was leading to do something harmful to herself?
2. In your own childhood, did you and a close friend ever share a secret Hideout?
3. Throughout the book, Lyssa doesn’t exhibit any serious religious conviction. But at the end, when she wakes up the next morning at the Hideout and finds the shiny penny on the tracks, suddenly she’s sure that when she looks to the sky, she’s seeing heaven for the first time. If you had no deeply religious belief, would that moment change you the way it did Lyssa?

About the author

Alicia Joseph grew up in Westchester, Illinois. She has two published novellas, Her Name and Loving Again. When she is not writing, she enjoys volunteering with animals, rooting for her favorite sports teams, and playing “awesome aunt” to her nine nieces and nephews.