



RULES
FOR

Ghosting

A NOVEL

*Shelly
Jay Shore*



BOOK CLUB KIT

DEAR READER,



Okay. Let's get into it.

How do you feel about ghosts?

I've always been taken in by the idea of a non-spooky ghost story. To me, ghosts were never nearly as scary as living people. The idea of opening up to the dead? Easy. The possibility of a vulnerable conversation with a living person? Hard pass.

I wrote *Rules for Ghosting* as a way of exploring a character who became so used to being haunted by the dead that he forgot how to really live—but to write that story in a way that shows how things like joy, community, laughter, family, and even romance can sneak their way into your life, no matter how determined you are to close yourself off to them. No matter how little you believe you deserve them.

At its heart, *Rules for Ghosting* is about connection. It's about loving your family even when you don't like them and deciding that maybe you like them after all. It's about falling in love when you least expect it, and realizing that your friends do, actually, have your back. It's about Jewish guilt and Jewish joy, about queer community and messy situationships. It's about how the ones we love never really leave us—even when we kind of wish they would.

We tell ghost stories as a way of talking about the things that we're missing, but, more often than not, they tell us more about what we still have than what we've lost. As you read *Rules for Ghosting* and meet Ezra, his friends and family, and their many ghosts, I hope you get to spend some time with your own ghosts—whether they're familiar old friends or you've just given yourself a chance to notice them. Whatever form they take, tell them I say hi.

Thank you so much for reading *Rules for Ghosting*. I hope you enjoy!

xoxo



SHELLY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. Ezra observes a set of strict spectral rules when it comes to the ghosts he reluctantly sees. Do you believe in ghosts or have you ever had a paranormal experience? If so, what is your “theory” of ghosts, what they’re like, and how they reach us?
2. In the book, Ezra is haunted—literally and figuratively—and burdened by the expectations that are foisted upon him. Is there a time or place in your life where you felt similar weights? What about a time in your life when you felt the pressure of high expectations? Did you feel motivated to rise to the occasion or paralyzed by the fear of failure?
3. Ezra often finds himself needing to step in as the Friedman family mediator, and he’s grown accustomed to taking the temperature of every room he enters and acting accordingly. Do you think people get assigned roles in their family? Did that happen to you? How do the stories families tell, and the stories we tell ourselves, shape our identities and expectations? Have you ever had to challenge those personal narratives or family myths?
4. Ezra’s father jokes to Ezra that he ran to “the other side of the life cycle” to get away from the funeral home. What conceptions of birth work and death work did you have before reading the book? Did anything surprise you?
5. Usually, secrets can shake a person’s trust in someone else. But Ezra reveals his clairvoyance to his siblings in an attempt to open up to them, even though he doesn’t tell Jonathan until much later. Do you think some secrets can build trust once revealed?
6. Our culture is obsessed with death. From *Ghost* to *Pushing Daisies* to *The Sixth Sense*, we have a cultural refusal to let death be final—and, as a result, ghosts are a constant fixture in books, movies, television, and even podcasts. Why do you think that is? How does *Rules for Ghosting* subvert your perception of a “ghost story”? Of the rom-com?
7. Shelly Jay Shore puts the “fun” in “funeral.” How do humor and tragedy, the macabre and the whimsical, go hand in hand? Why do you think we joke about death so often?
8. *Rules for Ghosting* is as much about a found family as it is about a family of origin. Discuss the importance of friendship in this story. Why do you think it’s valuable, and what does it provide that other relationships might not?
9. Discuss the novel’s contrasting main themes: love and grief, life and death. How are they at odds and how do they work together? What moments do you think sparked the biggest changes in Ezra’s character throughout the book? What moments come to mind in your own life? By the end of the story, how has Ezra’s growth affected his relationships with others?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



10. *Rules for Ghosting* spends a lot of time with Jewish funeral practices. What rituals or practices around death, dying, and funerals show up in your culture? What other kinds have you learned about? Do they resonate with you? Why or why not?
11. Discuss the novel's title. Did your understanding of it shift while reading?
12. Bobbi, Ezra's mother, spends a lot of time fretting about what her family thinks of her choices. Could she have handled her revelation better? Do you think her children responded the right way? At what point do we draw the line between an obligation to others—and to family—and the pursuit of our own personal happiness?
13. Besides the obvious, why do you think Ezra kept Ben's appearances from Jonathan for so long? Would you have done the same in his position?
14. If Ezra and Jonathan had a sequel, what do you think it would be about? How do you think Ezra handles his power of seeing ghosts in the future? What do you think is next for Ezra and Jonathan? What do you want for them?



FRIEDMAN FAMILY SEDER COCKTAILS



MIRIAM'S CUP

Ingredients:

- ½ cup tequila (agave-based)
- ½ oz. lime juice
- 2 tbsp. honey syrup
- Chili lime seasoning, or margarita salt
- Lime wedges (for garnish)

Instructions:

1. Rim two drinking glasses with a wedge of lime before dipping the wet rim into a small plate with chili lime seasoning or margarita salt. Fill each glass full with ice.
 2. Combine the honey syrup and the lime juice.
 3. Divide the tequila among both glasses (1/4 cup each per glass) and then divide the honey lime mixture.
 4. Garnish with lime.
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THE TENTH PLAGUE

Ingredients:

- 2 oz. tequila (agave-based)
- 1 oz. lime juice
- 1 oz. orange juice
- 2+ jalapeño slices (add more for extra spice)

Instructions:

1. Muddle your jalapeño slices in the bottom of a shaker to release their flavor.
 2. Add ice and the rest of the ingredients and shake well.
 3. Strain and garnish with a lime wedge.
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THE WICKED SON

Ingredients:

- 3 oz. horseradish-infused vodka (potato-based)
- 1 golden beet (raw, peeled)
- Fresh red beet (raw, peeled, for garnish)

Instructions:

1. Cut the golden beets into small pieces and muddle thoroughly in a mixing glass with half an ounce (15 ml) of the vodka.
2. Add the remaining vodka to the mixing glass and fill 2/3 full of ice. Shake vigorously.
3. Strain through a fine mesh strainer into a chilled cocktail glass.
4. Garnish with a stick of red beet and a dash of kosher for Passover hot sauce at the moment of serving.

FRIEDMAN FAMILY CHALLAH



Ingredients:

- 7 oz. water
- 2 ½ tsp. active dry yeast
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- Heat water to warm, not hot (ideally about 100°F. Stir in yeast and sugar and place in warm (not hot—again, about 100°F) oven for about 5 minutes, or until foamy.
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 ½ large eggs (add 1, put the 2nd in a glass, beat it up, then pour about ½ in the flour, save the rest for painting)
- 2 oz. vegetable oil

Instructions:

1. Pour the proofed yeast mixture into a large bowl. Add in the remaining ingredients and mix.
2. Begin kneading, adding flour as needed to keep it from being sticky. You'll end up adding ¼ to ½ cup of additional flour. Knead until elastic and smooth, and dough doesn't stick to hands.
3. When kneaded thoroughly, put in an oiled bowl, rolling the dough around so it is coated in oil). Cover the bowl with damp dish towel, and let rise in warm place for about 1.5 hours.

4. Remove from bowl, separate the challah, and recite blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר

קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַפְרִישׁ חֵלֶה מִן הָעֶסָה

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hafreesh challah min ha'esah.

5. Braid in the style of your preference. Place braided loaves on aluminum foil on cookie sheet and rise for an additional 30 minutes.
6. Paint the challah with the leftover ½ egg (you can add a bit of water and/or maple syrup to the paint) then bake 350°F 30–33 mins. Remove from oven and let cool before peeling off foil. This recipe makes four baby challahs, three medium, or two decent size.

PLAYLIST

WHAT'S UP?

4 Non Blondes

YOU SEEMED SO HAPPY

The Japanese House

ALL ALRIGHT

fun

GOOD OLD-FASHIONED LOVER BOY

Queen

OLD ME

5 Seconds of Summer

FINALLY // BEAUTIFUL STRANGER

Halsey

PINK + WHITE

Frank Ocean

TRANSATLANTICISM

Death Cab for Cutie

BREATHE ME

Sia

SAY YOU WON'T LET GO

James Arthur

UNTIL WE GET THERE (ACOUSTIC)

Lucius

WITHOUT YOU

Leslie Odom Jr.

I LIVED

OneRepublic

SIMPLY THE BEST

Noah Reid

DRINK THE WATER

Jack Johnson

KISS THE BOY

Keiynan Lonsdale

HOME WE'LL GO (TAKE MY HAND)

Steve Aoki

