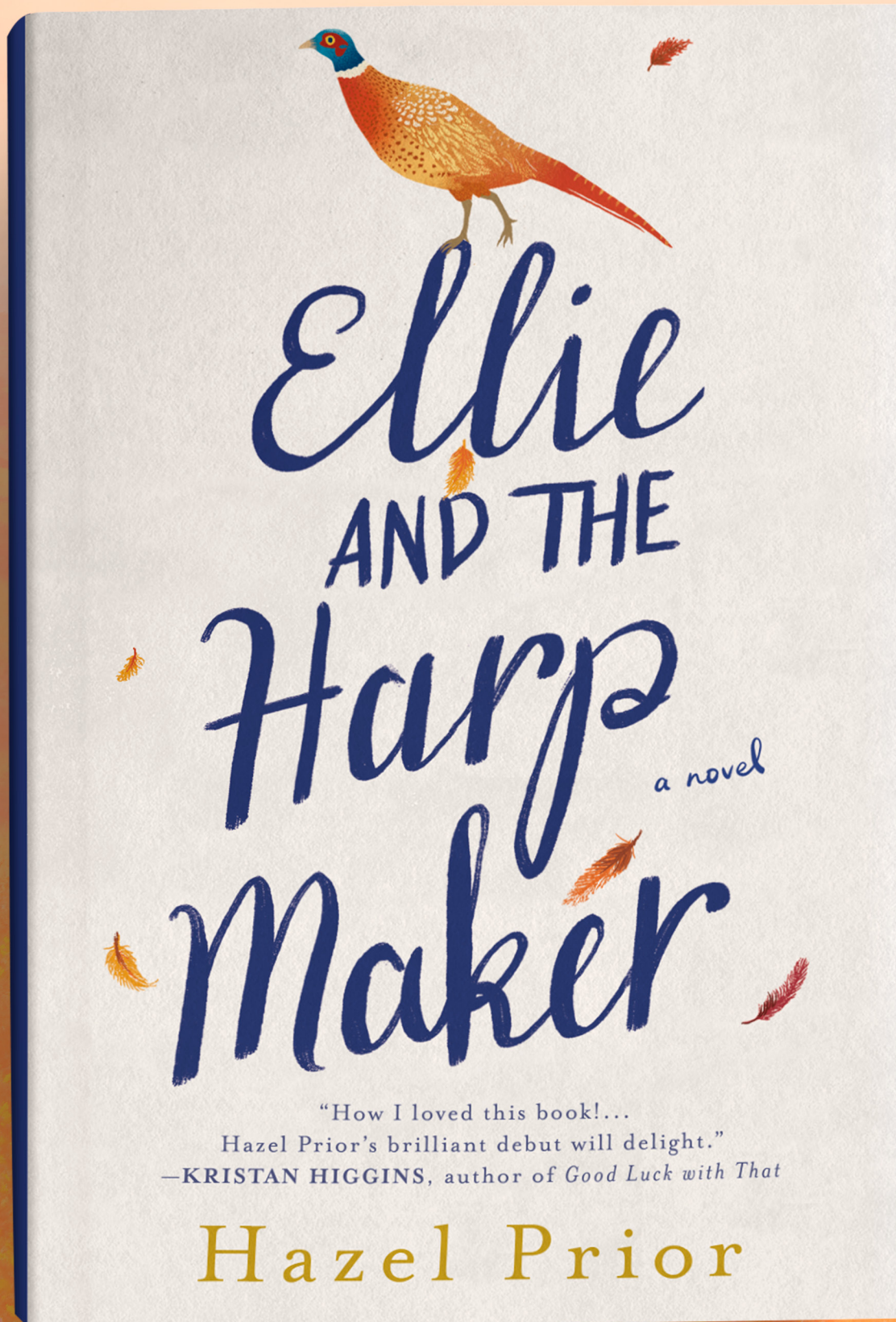



# Book Club Kit





# Dear Readers,




How many of us have a secret dream? How many of us have several? Maybe even a bucket list of things we'd like to achieve one day? I suspect I'm not the only one.

Before I started writing, I was a musician. You wouldn't believe the number of people who approached me after performances and declared: "I've always wanted to play the harp." So many! I realized I'd managed to make harp playing a reality for myself, but my audiences had no idea what a long and complicated process it had been. I started thinking about the power of dreams, about the challenges they present, about our longing for fulfillment and self-expression . . . and this is how *Ellie and the Harpmaker* began.

The book is named after the two main characters, and you'll experience the story through their very different perspectives. Dan feels he is better off shut away from social situations because he doesn't think or behave in ways that are considered normal. Ellie has always strived to "fit in", but at what cost to herself? When they meet they both begin to realize that their lives could be so much more—but only if they are prepared to step out of their comfort zones and navigate their way through a series of unexpected dramas. I have loved looking at the world through the eyes of these two. I hope you will too.

I am also hoping to bring you a taste of Exmoor, the beautiful wild landscape that I'm happy to call home. A quote often attributed to George Santayana is: "The earth has music for those who listen." I think it's true—and so does Dan! Exmoor felt just right for the setting of this story. Here you will find woods, hills, streams and another rather important character: Phineas the Pheasant.

Thank you so very much for choosing to read my debut novel. Please enjoy it!



All my best,

Hazel







# Ellie's Plum Jam

*Recipe borrowed from  
Ellie's kind friend Christina*

**4 lb. English plums  
(from Dan's orchard if possible)**

**20 oz. cold water**

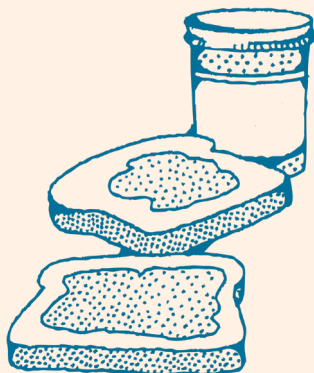
**4 lb. granulated sugar**

Wash plums, de-stone and cut in half. Put them in a pan with the water. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat. Simmer, stirring occasionally, for about 45 minutes or until the plums are squashy and the liquid is reduced by about half.

Add the sugar, stirring until it has all dissolved. Boil rapidly for 4-5 minutes.

Remove from the heat and test by spooning a little jam onto a chilled saucer. Cool for a few seconds, then push the jam with your finger. If it wrinkles on the surface, it has reached setting point and is ready. If not, boil for another 2 minutes, then test again. (Enjoy licking your fingers.)

Skim off the scum from the surface using a slotted spoon. Leave to stand for 15 minutes, then stir thoroughly. Pour the jam into warm jars. Seal tightly. Add a frilly hat to the jar to make it look pretty.



# Dan's Peanut Butter Sandwiches



*Suitable for feeding harpmakers, housewives,  
and injured pheasants in need of love*

**6 slices of bread, whole wheat if possible and  
must be organic**

**Butter or low-fat spread, depending on your  
tastes and dietary requirements**

**Peanut butter**

Lay the slices of bread out on your countertop in a straight line. Mentally number the slices 1 to 6.

Next, spread one side of each slice with butter or your chosen low-fat spread. Be sure that it is spread evenly and right up to the corners.

Add a smooth layer of peanut butter to slices 1, 3, and 5.

Lay slice 2 butter-side down onto slice 1, slice 4 butter-side down onto slice 3, and slice 6 butter-side down onto slice 5, fitting them together with care and precision. Press lightly.

With a sharp knife, cut them into the desired shapes. If they are intended for a lady, it is recommended that the shapes are triangles. Diamond shapes are also acceptable when variety is required. Pheasants are not fussy.





# Harp Facts

**Angels are apparently adept at playing the harp.**

If we're to trust depictions of heaven in art, it must be a place full of harp music.

There are also many references to harps in the Bible. David played his harp to drive away Saul's evil spirit.

**So the harp is historically a force for good.**

**Apart from drums and other percussion, the harp is supposed to be the most ancient instrument of all.**

It is thought that it evolved from a hunting bow. (Somebody noticed the twang as the arrow left the string and thought: supposing we added more strings . . . ?)

**There are many types of harp:** classical/concert harps (the huge ones you see playing in orchestras), medieval harps (much smaller and simpler), electro-harps, Paraguayan harps, and **Celtic harps like the ones Dan makes.**

**Harp strings can be made from metal, gut, nylon or fluorocarbon.**

There are a lot of strings so, to help you navigate, **the C strings are colored red and the F strings are colored blue or black.**

**Tuning up takes ages.** In the words of Stravinsky: "Harpists spend 90 percent of their lives tuning their harps and 10 percent playing out of tune"!

# Harp Playlist

## **HIP HIP BOURÉE / PHEASANT FEATHERS**

By Wendy Stewart

## **MOZART'S FLUTE AND HARP CONCERTO IN C**

### **AN DRO NEVEZ**

(Traditional Breton tune)

Played by Patrick Ball

### **LONELY MELODY**

By Dorothy Ashby

### **THE SOURCE**

By Savourna Stevenson

### **SMILE**

By Foxwillow Trio

### **POMPEII**

By Bastille • Played by Lara Somogyi on Electroacoustic Harp

## **HANDEL'S HARP CONCERTO IN B FLAT**

### **TEN THOUSAND MILES**

(Traditional) Arranged & played by

Jenny Crook & Henry Sears

### **HARRY POTTER (HEDWIG'S THEME)**

Arranged & played by Harp Twins

(Camille and Kennerly)





# Questions for Discussion



1. There are plenty of memorable scenes in the novel. Which were your favorite moments and why?
2. Ellie has fallen in love with the idea of playing a harp. How does the reality compare with the dream? Do dreams ever turn out the way we expect?
3. Were you surprised that Dan makes beautiful harps but doesn't play them? Why do you think that is?
4. Why does Dan think he isn't made of the right ingredients? Are there any "right ingredients" for a relationship?
5. How do Ellie's perceptions change throughout the novel: of Rhoda, of Clive and of herself? Can we ever really trust our own judgment of other people?
6. Dan says, "Music helps fill up the holes that people leave behind." Is music a luxury or a lifeline? How does music change Ellie?
7. "As I watch from the window the landscape becomes wilder and hillier and sheepier. I feel that simultaneously I am becoming *Dannier*. . . . Exmoor, in a way, is me." Why are his surroundings so important to Dan? What does "home" mean to you, and what does your home say about your identity?
8. In what ways have Ellie and Dan been shaped by their parents? How does this bear on their decisions regarding Ed?
9. The fire brings several realizations to both Dan and Ellie. What are they? Has a crisis in your own life ever helped you see things afresh?
10. Why do you think Phineas the Pheasant is so important to Dan?
11. What are the different types of love in the novel? Which do you think is the strongest?
12. What do you think the future holds for Ellie, Dan, and Ed?



# About Hazel Prior



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**HAZEL PRIOR** is a harpist based in Exmoor, England. Originally from Oxford, she fell in love with the harp as a student and now performs regularly. She's had short stories published in literary magazines and has won numerous writing competitions in the UK. *Ellie and the Harpmaker* is her first novel, and she is working on her second.

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