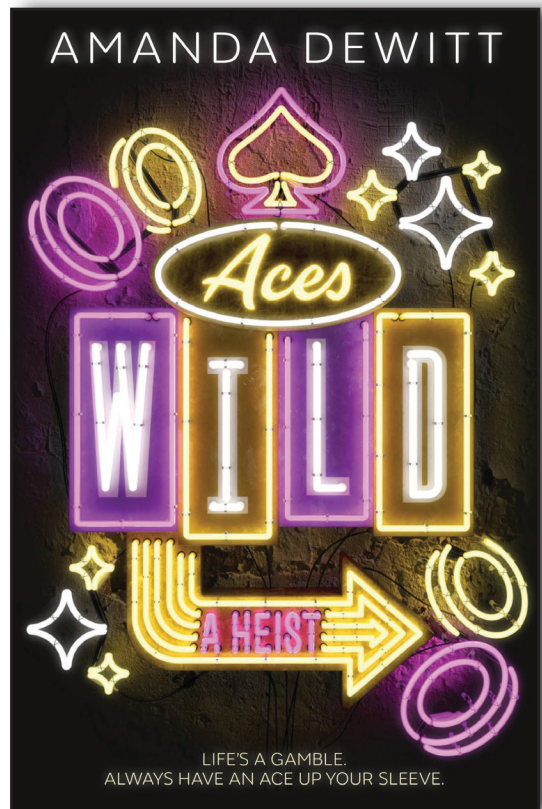


READING GROUP  
GUIDE



## *Aces Wild: A Heist*

by Amanda DeWitt

### ABOUT THE BOOK

What happens in Vegas when an all-asexual online friend group attempts to break into a high-stakes gambling club? Shenanigans ensue.

Some people join chess club, some people play football. Jack Shannon runs a secret blackjack ring in his private school's basement. Everything starts falling apart when Jack's mom is arrested for their family's ties to organized crime. His mom was sold out, and he knows by whom. Peter Carlevaro: rival casino owner and jilted lover. Gross. Jack hatches a plan to find out what Carlevaro's holding over his mom's head, but he can't do it alone. He recruits his closest friends—the asexual support group he met through fandom forums. Now all he has to do is infiltrate a high-stakes gambling club and dodge dark family secrets, while hopelessly navigating what it means to be in love while asexual. Easy, right?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The novel begins with A Note on Expectations. Explain the very first sentence: “Let’s get one thing straight: This is not a love story.” The narrator, Jack Shannon, states that there will be crimes and lying. How does this explain the subtitle of the book, “A Heist”? Jack says this story is “a confession” (p. 2). What does Jack confess by the end of the novel?
- Describe Jack Shannon. How has his homelife shaped him as a person? He refers to himself as a loner. What is the first hint that this assessment is correct? Why does he form the Beginner’s Blackjack Club at Elkhollow Preparatory Academy? How do his blackjack skills serve him well?
- Jack’s mom, a casino mogul, has been arrested in Las Vegas. How does Jack learn of her arrest? Explain why the judge refused bail. Discuss why Jack’s father and sisters, Beth and Kerry, have returned to Las Vegas. What do they hope to accomplish? What is Jack’s reaction when he learns that Beth wants to become his guardian? Discuss Beth’s advice: “Forget about Mom . . . Live for *you*. Be a kid” (p. 51).
- How does Jack know that Peter Carlevaro is behind his mother’s arrest? What is Carlevaro’s motive? Discuss Jack’s plan to expose Carlevaro. Why is it so important to Jack to win? How much of it is about pride and how much about survival?
- Describe the group Aces Wild. How did they meet? How does the group get their name? What do they have in common? What are their differences? Explain how Jack plans to use them to conduct the heist.

- Explain the following simile: “It felt like having friends over for a sleepover for the first time and showing them your room” (p. 79). Which of the kids is the first to realize that this is about Jack’s mom? Describe the reaction of each of the friends when they learn the truth.
- How does Jack get into the Avalon Club? Jack overhears a woman talking about “a little black book” (p. 132) that Peter Carlevaro keeps. What is the significance of the contents of the book? How does Jack realize the importance of acquiring the book?
- At what point does it appear that Beth is betraying Jack and the entire Shannon family? How does Jack deal with this betrayal? Beth had assumed that Jack’s friends were from Elkhollow. What is her reaction when she learns the truth about the group? Explain the irony when she tells Jack she trusted him.
- What is significant about the sword-and-crown symbol on the keycard that Kerry finds in their mother’s jewelry box? At what point does Jack realize what the keycard means? Discuss Jack’s reaction when he learns that Peter is his father. How does he feel betrayed by his mother? When does he realize that his mother is in prison to protect Jack from him?
- How do Jack and Aces Wild finally solve the crime? Peter Carlevaro is arrested for all kinds of illegal activity. How does this change the entire Shannon family? Debate whether this makes Jack a hero.

## ABOUT THE CREATOR



**Amanda DeWitt** is an author and librarian, ensuring that she spends as much time around books as possible. She also enjoys Star Wars, Dungeons & Dragons-ing, and even more writing, just not whatever it is she really should be writing. She graduated from the University of South Florida with a master’s degree in information and library science. She lives in Clearwater, Florida, with her dogs, cats, and assortment of chickens. *Aces Wild: A Heist* is her debut novel.