



PAST PERFECT LIFE

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DISCUSSION GUIDE QUESTIONS

- How would you describe Ally's relationship with her father before the revelation? Are they similar to any relationship you have with a family member? If so, how?
- At one point Ally wonders, "How can you be so angry with someone, be so devastated by their betrayal, yet still love them?" Do you think it's possible to love someone who has betrayed a person in such a way?
- Ally describes her life as split in two: before she finds out the truth about her past, and after. What are the biggest emotional changes for her? If you found out something similar about yourself, would you react differently? How?
- The Gleasons are a big part of Ally's life before. Do you come from a big or small family? What are some of the benefits and challenges from having a big or small family?
- At first, Ally is resistant to reach out to her mother. Why do you think it took her so long? Do you agree with her reluctance?
- Ally is afraid about starting a new life in Tampa. Have you ever had to start over again in a new school or city? How did you approach it?
- What were your first impressions of Paula, Craig, and Sarah? How did they change as the book went on?
- Initially, Sarah is not welcoming to Ally. What was the shift between the two? After Sarah explained what life was like for her growing up, did you understand her coldness better?
- Christmas day was especially hard for Ally. Do you and your family have any special holiday traditions?
- At one point, Craig tells Paula, "You're still so angry about the past and what you lost that you are pushing [Ally] away." In what ways does Paula push Ally away? How does Ally contribute to their tense relationship?
- Ally refers to her mother as "Paula" for most of the book. When does she start calling her "Mom"? Why do you think she made the change?