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Everything That Follows

by Meg Little Reilly



About the Book

For fans of Megan Abbott and Chris Bohjalian comes a novel of moral complexity about friends who must choose between self-preservation and doing the right thing in the wake of a fatal boating accident. Set in the moody off-season of Martha?s Vineyard, EVERYTHING THAT FOLLOWS is a plunge into the dark waters of secrets and flexible morals. The truth becomes whatever we say it is?

Around midnight, three friends take their partying from bar to boat on a misty fall evening. Just as the weather deteriorates, one of them suddenly and confusingly goes overboard. Is it an accident? The result of an unwanted advance? His body disappears quickly, silently, into the dark water. The circumstances are murky, but what is clear is that the other two need to notify the authorities. Minutes become hours become days as they hesitate, caught up in their guilt and hope that their friend has somehow made it safely to shore. As valuable time passes, they find themselves deep in a moral morass with huge implications as they struggle to move forward and live with their dark secret.

Discussion Guide

1. What motivates Kat to defer to Hunter and not immediately go to the police? Do you think their decision to delay is defensible? Is it ever defensible to choose self preservation over what?s morally right?

2. Much of Kat?s perception of justice is shaped by her class and lack of power, particularly relative to Hunter. Does that make her behavior more or less justifiable?

3. A major theme of this story is who gets to control the truth and whether it matters at all. Did Kyle?s mother deserve the truth about her son? Can withholding some truths be an act of kindness?

4. Sean?s deep sense of morality is admirable, but it also makes him rigid and judgmental. Do you think he made the

right choice about what to do with the truth? How would you have handled it differently?

5. The setting of Martha?s Vineyard is a strong presence in this story; it?s both naturally striking and culturally unique for its mix of vacationers and year-rounders. Have you ever lived in a place where others go only to play? How do you think that dynamic might affect your feelings about home?

6. Kat?s guilt and her quest for cosmic justice drives much of her subsequent behavior. Is guilt ever a constructive force? Do you think she is absolved in the end?

7. Memory is a slippery thing in this story as Kat?s memory of the night in question --- and of Kyle --- warp and change over time. How reliable do you think her memory would have been if she told the police right away?

8. The tragic incident in this story is triggered by Kyle?s aggression toward Kat, but he never actually acts on his perceived threats --- and we?ll never know if he would have, given the chance. Is Kyle a predator? What did he deserve in that moment?

9. In many ways, this is a story about redemption. Kat wants it for herself, but she also ultimately wants it for Kyle, even though she?s ambivalent about whether or not he deserves it. Even Hunter wants it in the eyes of his father. Who deserves redemption in this story? Can we ever be truly redeemed after doing what these characters have done?

10. Whether or not you believe in ghosts, do you believe it?s possible to escape the hauntings of our past? Kat and Hunter ultimately decide that their escape has to be physical as well as mental. Have you ever been haunted by a person or a memory? How did you escape it?

Author Bio

Meg Little Reilly is the author of the novels THE MISFORTUNES OF FAMILY, EVERYTHING THAT FOLLOWS and WE ARE UNPREPARED. She?s a public radio commentator, essayist and outdoors enthusiast. Prior to writing novels, Meg worked in national politics and the White House. She holds a BA from the University of Vermont and an MA from the George Washington University. These days, she lives in rural Vermont with her husband and two daughters.

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