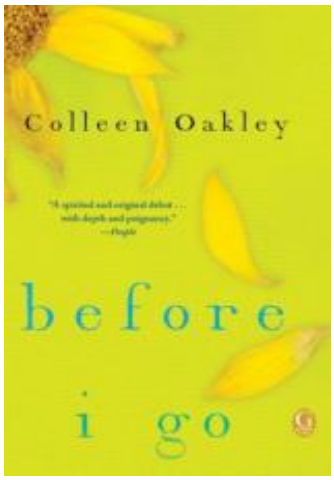
ReadingGroupGuides
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Before I Go

by Colleen Oakley



About the Book

Twenty-seven-year-old Daisy already beat breast cancer three years ago. How can this be happening to her again?

On the eve of what was supposed to be a triumphant ?Cancerversary? with her husband Jack to celebrate three years of being cancer-free, Daisy suffers a devastating blow: Her doctor tells her that the cancer is back, but this time it?s an aggressive stage-IV diagnosis. She may have as few as four months left to live. Having already endured brutal rounds of chemo and radiation in her early 20s, Daisy decides that she doesn?t want to go through it all over again --- especially when the odds are already stacked against her. Instead, she forgoes treatment and focuses on what suddenly becomes her most pressing concern: What will happen to her brilliant but otherwise charmingly helpless husband when she?s no longer there to take care of him?

This alarming thought sparks a selfless undertaking: Daisy decides that in the time she has left, she needs to find her husband a ?replacement wife? who can be there for him when her time comes. After scouting the local singles scene in her hometown of Athens, Georgia, and scouring online dating sites unbeknownst to Jack, Daisy finds the perfect match?only to realize that this potential ?replacement? already volunteers at the animal hospital where Jack works as a vet-in-training. Suddenly, as the reality of seeing her husband with another (decidedly more compatible) woman becomes all *too* real, Daisy regrets having set everything in motion in the first place?but is it too late to take it all back?

Discussion Guide

1. At the beginning of the story, Daisy describes herself as stubborn, independent, organized and definitely not indecisive. What words would you use to describe her at the beginning of the story?

2. After receiving the news from Dr. Saunders about the probable recurrence of her cancer, Daisy waits 24 hours before telling Jack. Why do you think she waited? What do you learn about Daisy and Jack?s relationship from the way they

navigate the conversation when she tells him the news?

3. Daisy describes her observation about people from her work at a credit card call center by saying, ??most people just want to talk. To be heard. Even if it is by a stranger. Or maybe, especially if it?s a stranger.? Do you think she wants this for herself? Is this observation true for you? Why or why not?

4. On page 78, Daisy says: ??there?s only one thing that?s worse than actually having cancer, and that?s having to tell people you have cancer.? What do you think makes talking about cancer (or any other serious illness) so awkward for most people? How would you want people to respond if you were in Daisy?s situation?

5. How is Daisy?s response to the question ?If you knew you were going to die in one month, what would you do?? different at age 27 than it was at age 21? How did she use the first month following the news about her cancer?s recurrence? What did you feel toward her as you read the story of how she was spending her days? How would you answer the question?

6. How would you describe Jack?s response to Daisy as she pushes him away? Do you think he represents a typical partner?s response? Why or why not? How would you respond to someone you knew had a serious illness and seemed to be pushing you away?

7. What do you think Daisy is trying to avoid by focusing on planning Jack?s future before she dies?

8. Describe Daisy?s friendship with Kayleigh. In what ways are they similar? How are they opposite? Do you relate to the kind of friendship they share? Describe.

9. What do you think were some of the factors that precipitated Daisy?s panic attacks? Have you ever experienced a panic attack or known someone who has?

10. Describe the bargain Jack and Daisy made about each others? schooling when they learned about the extent of her cancer recurrence. Why do you think Daisy was so intent on Jack continuing school in the midst of her cancer treatments? Would you have made the same decision? Why or why not?

11. What role does Pamela play in the story? How does she serve a similar function for both Daisy and Jack?

12. Based on what you learn about Daisy?s life as a young girl, what are some of the ways she has learned to cope with pain and disappointment in her life? How do those strategies serve or hinder her when she?s diagnosed with Lots of Cancer?

13. On page 219, Daisy quotes a therapist she saw once who said, ?anger is grief wearing a disguise.? Do you agree? Why or why not? Do you think Daisy would agree at the end of the story?

14. How do you feel about the way the story ended?

Enhance Your Book Club

1. Invite someone you know who is a cancer survivor to share his or her story at your next book club. Spend time discussing the question, ?If you had a month to live, what would you do??

2. Make a bucket list. Spend time thinking about the things you want to experience before you die and write them down. Make plans to start crossing things off your list, one at a time. Discuss your lists at your next book club.

3. Think of someone in your life who is dealing with a chronic or terminal illness. Make a list of a few ways you could encourage and demonstrate care for them during this time. Make a plan to do at least one of the things on your list for them. Discuss what this was like at your next book club.

4. Notice the things that make you angry in the course of a week and write them down. Spend some time reflecting on what griefs your anger may be disguising. Share reflections at your next book club.

Author Bio

Colleen Oakley is the *USA Today* bestselling author of JANE AND DAN AT THE END OF THE WORLD, THE MOSTLY TRUE STORY OF TANNER & LOUISE, THE INVISIBLE HUSBAND OF FRICK ISLAND, YOU WERE THERE TOO, CLOSE ENOUGH TO TOUCH and BEFORE I GO. Her books have been translated into more than 20 languages around the world and won multiple awards, including Georgia Author of the Year and The French Reader?s Prize. A former magazine editor for *Women?s Health & Fitness* and *Marie Claire*, Colleen lives in Atlanta with her husband, four children, three chickens and a mutt named Baxter.

Critical Praise

"Colleen Oakley takes on the big three --- life, death and love --- and delivers a jewel. BEFORE I GO absolutely glows with humor, wit and compassion. I adore Oakley?s fresh voice and could hardly bear for the book to end."

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