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Greenwich Park

by Katherine Faulkner



About the Book

A twisty, whip-smart debut thriller, as electrifying as the #1 *New York Times* bestseller THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN, about impending motherhood, unreliable friendship and the high price of keeping secrets.

Helen?s idyllic life --- handsome architect husband, gorgeous Victorian house and cherished baby on the way (after years of trying) --- begins to change the day she attends her first prenatal class and meets Rachel, an unpredictable single mother-to-be. Rachel doesn?t seem very maternal: she smokes, drinks and professes little interest in parenthood. Still, Helen is drawn to her. Maybe Rachel just needs a friend. And to be honest, Helen is a bit lonely herself. At least Rachel is fun to be with. She makes Helen laugh, invites her confidences and distracts her from her fears.

But her increasingly erratic behavior is unsettling. And Helen is not the only one who?s noticed. Her friends and family begin to suspect that her strange new friend may be linked to their shared history in unexpected ways. When Rachel threatens to expose a past crime that could destroy all of their lives, it becomes clear that there are more than a few secrets laying beneath the broad-leaved trees and warm lamplight of Greenwich Park.

Discussion Guide

1. When Helen first meets Rachel at the prenatal class she?s signed up for, Helen notices that Rachel behaves relatively carelessly in navigating her own pregnancy. Helen?s quiet judgments suggest a combination of pity, scorn and envy for her new friend, who doesn?t seem to be burdened by the same loss and desperation for the perfect family that has been plaguing Helen. We later learn that Rachel has her own dark history, and that she offers more to Helen than Helen realizes. Discuss first impressions. Was there a time when you learned something unexpected, yet deeply affecting, about someone you?d only just met?

2. Helen?s husband, Daniel, and her brother Rory work together at her father?s old company, Haverstock. We?re made

aware of Rory?s relative professional irresponsibility as well as Daniel?s often frustrated attempts to fill the gap left behind by Helen?s father, Richard. Yet Daniel, who seems overburdened by expectation, remains far from the perfect husband, and his future as a father seems less hopeful. In what ways does Daniel fulfill the role of the ideal husband? How can those traits in turn make him less suited to provide care and understanding?

3. The book is broken into multiple perspectives: we see the events of GREENWICH PARK unfold through Helen, Katie and Serena, as well as other voices whose identities aren?t always clear. Furthermore, events continue to happen, or have happened in the past, that we as readers aren?t always made privy to in the course of the story. How does this affect the narrative progression of the novel? Do you feel all your questions have been answered at the end of the book? Discuss whether this reflects the nature of relationships inside the novel.

4. Helen, Daniel, Rory and Serena were all college companions before the events of GREENWICH PARK, and we meet them at a time when their lives appear to have grown relatively stable. Though they?ve been friends for a long time, was it possible to spot the potential cracks in their relationships earlier on? What is required for a close friendship to last?

5. Early in GREENWICH PARK, Katie, who works as a reporter, cinches an exclusive interview with the survivor of a closing sexual assault case just as the threads in the relationships between Rachel, Helen and Helen?s family begin to twist. While on the job, Katie comes face-to-face with the aftershocks of trauma, managing to persuade a hurt, vulnerable woman to share her story. How does Katie?s impactful career accomplishment affect the way she feels about what unfolds with Rachel? Discuss how personal experience can change the way one views trauma.

6. The crack in the new foundation being laid in Helen and Daniel?s cellar appears shortly after Helen?s house party just as we learn that Rachel has gone missing. At the heart of the Greenwich house, this crack is highly symbolic as key schisms come to bear in the ties between Helen, Daniel, Rory, Serena and Charlie. However, we also begin to learn several important truths long hidden about the main characters in the novel. Discuss if a breaking point was inevitable in the lives of Helen and her family. How does this one particular ?crack in the foundation? affect the reading of GREENWICH PARK?

7. Helen?s family home at Greenwich Park --- and indeed the homes of Serena and Rory, Charlie, Katie and even Rachel --- all play an important thematic role in the novel. Throughout the book, Greenwich Park is in the process of renovation, undergoing significant change that coincides with Helen?s pregnancy. We also learn that the construction belies deeper mechanisms of change at play as the truth behind Rachel and why she?s entered into the lives of the main characters is revealed. Discuss what GREENWICH PARK has to say about what makes a home. How do characters in the novel react when their homes are threatened, either from outside or within?

8. Katie learns more about Rachel?s family after paying her father, John, a visit in Cambridge on her day off. It grows increasingly apparent that Rachel comes from what seems like a broken family. In what ways do the key differences between Rachel and Helen?s upbringings seem visible earlier in the novel before we ever follow Katie to meet Rachel?s father? Is it possible, and if so, how, that Rachel and Helen?s childhoods were at all similar?

9. The reader is able to closely follow Helen?s pregnancy since sections of the novel are distinguished by how far along Helen is in her term. Helen is particularly protective about this pregnancy, having previously struggled with getting pregnant and then miscarrying. Helen even on occasion compares her own experience with that of her brothers? partners, Serena and Maja. Though pregnancy is markedly an experience definitive of motherhood, how does it reveal other

aspects of Helen throughout GREENWICH PARK? What does it offer Helen, as well as her husband, Daniel, that they don?t seem to have had before?

10. When the police arrive at Helen?s doorstep, we receive our first in-text confirmation that things with Rachel, though always somewhat mysterious, have indeed taken a turn for the grim. In response to the officers inquiring about Rachel?s whereabouts, Helen responds saying that Rachel has gone to stay with her mother, as evidenced by a text message Rachel has sent her. Later, Helen finds herself at a loss regarding what has unfolded the night of her party, when we last see Rachel. At what point were you able to detect that something was awry? Was it during the party? Or before? Discuss what aspects of GREENWICH PARK lend themselves to suspense.

11. When Helen learns the truth about what has happened to Rachel, as well as many truths about Daniel and then Serena, she still seems unable to come to terms with the details of what has happened. What does Helen hang on to even after discovering the reality of what those close to her have done? Discuss the difficulty of coming to terms with knowing that someone isn?t who they?ve made themselves out to be.

12. When baby Leo James is born, we learn that his growth in the final months of his term inside Helen was stunted, potentially by drugs. Serena later quietly admits to drugging Helen with Helen?s own medication. Discuss moments in GREENWICH PARK where Helen?s point of view seemed blurred. Did you also find yourself losing track of moments, things or people in the book?

13. Serena evidences that she?s pulled many of the invisible strings that drive the events of the novel in its final moments. Can you pinpoint instances where her behavior or language might indicate this? Discuss other potential suspects you may have considered behind Rachel?s disappearance.

Author Bio

Katherine Faulkner, an award-winning journalist, studied history at Cambridge. She has worked as an investigative reporter and an editor and was formerly the joint Head of News at *The Times* (London). She lives in London, where she grew up, with her husband and two daughters. She is the author of THE BREAK-IN, THE OTHER MOTHERS and GREENWICH PARK.

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