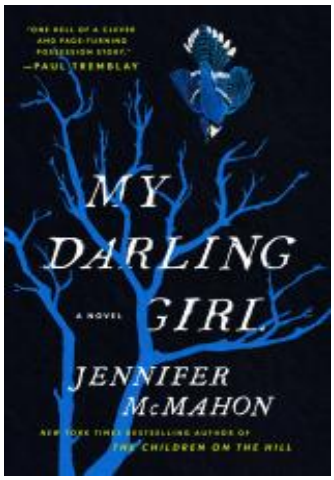
My Darling Girl

by Jennifer McMahon



About the Book

The *New York Times* bestselling author of the ?otherworldly treat? (*People*) THE DROWNING KIND and THE CHILDREN ON THE HILL returns with a spine-tingling psychological thriller about a woman who, after taking in her dying, alcoholic mother, begins to suspect that demonic possession is haunting her family.

Alison has never been a fan of Christmas. But with it right around the corner and her husband busily decorating their cozy Vermont home, she has no choice but to face it. Then she gets the call.

Mavis, Alison?s estranged mother, has been diagnosed with cancer and has only weeks to live. She wants to spend her remaining days with her daughter, son-in-law and two granddaughters. But Alison grew up with her mother?s alcoholism and violent abuse and is reluctant to unearth these traumatic memories. Still, she eventually agrees to take in Mavis, hoping that she and her mother could finally heal and have the relationship she?s always dreamed of.

But when mysterious and otherworldly things start happening upon Mavis? arrival, Alison begins to suspect that her mother is not quite who she seems. And as the holiday festivities turn into a nightmare, she must confront just how far she is willing to go to protect her family.

Discussion Guide

1. In MY DARLING GIRL, readers are immediately introduced to Alison O?Conner through a chilling flashback to her childhood. How does this introduction to Alison and her mother, Mavis, set up the rest of the story?

2. In Chapter 2, Alison meets Paul at the hospital where Mavis is staying. What was your first impression of Paul and his relationship with Mavis?

3. ?I sometimes thought about Ben?s theory that our mother had never wanted children. But she had been different once. When our father was still alive? (p. 17). Alison and Ben remember the events of their childhood differently when they discuss it. How does this affect their dynamic while Alison is caring for their dying mother?

4. ?I remembered all the times when she was drunk and angry, that she?d called me a worthless girl. Maybe I was there to prove I wasn?t so worthless? (p. 22). This is the explanation Alison gives readers for why she visits her mother in the hospital. Do you believe her?

5. Alison has been understandably apprehensive about allowing her mother around her family over the years. What do think motivated Alison to remain in contact with her mother during her adulthood?

6. ?She and the stone shared a complicated history; they were inextricably linked? (p. 65). When Mavis arrives at the O?Conner home, she brings along her coveted stone. What do you think about the relationship between Mavis and Bobbi? Knowing the stone?s significance, do you think there is more to Bobbi?s death than we learn about in the novel?

7. Throughout the story, Alison reflects on how much she was like Izzy when she was her age. What similarities do you see between the two of them? How does this impact their relationship?

8. Olivia?s upcoming role in *The Nutcracker* is a recurring topic of discussion for the characters. What is the significance of the ballet in the book?

9. When Alison?s behavior becomes worrisome, Mark suggests going back to therapy, but readers quickly learn that she never went all those years before. Why do you think she lies about seeing a therapist?

10. In Chapter 22, Alison chooses to share with Penny her theory about her mother?s condition. Do you think it was wise of Alison to discuss her suspicions?

11. In Chapter 13, Alison reflects on the incident with the blue jay, which she describes as the ?most terrible thing? (p. 117) she?s ever done. What is the significance of the blue jay?

12. At the end of the novel, time jumps ahead eight months. What did you think while reading the last chapter? Was it fate that determined what happened to the characters, or was it the choices they made?

Author Bio

Jennifer McMahon is the author of 13 novels, including the *New York Times* bestsellers THE CHILDREN ON THE HILL, PROMISE NOT TO TELL and THE WINTER PEOPLE. She lives in Florida with her partner, Drea.

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