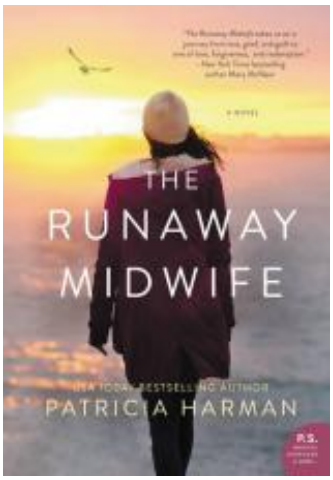
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

The Runaway Midwife

by Patricia Harman



About the Book

From the *USA Today* bestselling author of the *Hope River* series comes a new contemporary midwife novel.

Say ?goodbye? to your old life, and ?hello? to the life you?ve been waiting for?

Midwife Clara Perry is accustomed to comforting her pregnant patients?calming fathers-to-be as they anxiously await the birth of their children?ensuring the babies she delivers come safely into the world.

But when Clara?s life takes a nosedive, she realizes she hasn?t been tending to her own needs and does something drastic: she runs away and starts over again in a place where no one knows her or the mess she?s left behind in West Virginia. Heading to Sea Gull Island --- a tiny, remote Canadian island --- Clara is ready for anything. Well, almost. She left her passport back home, and the only way she can enter Canada is by hitching a ride on a snowmobile and illegally crossing the border.

Deciding to reinvent herself, Clara takes a new identity --- Sara Livingston, a writer seeking solitude. But there?s no avoiding the outside world. The residents are friendly, and draw ?Sara? into their lives and confidences. She volunteers at the local medical clinic, using her midwifery skills, and forms a tentative relationship with a local police officer.

But what will happen if she lets down her guard and reveals the real reason why she left her old life? One lesson soon becomes clear: no matter how far you run, you can never really hide from your past.

Discussion Guide

Introduction

Midwife Clara Perry is accustomed to comforting her pregnant patients?calming fathers-to-be as they anxiously await the birth of their children?ensuring the babies she delivers come safely into the world.

But when Clara?s life takes a nosedive, she realizes she hasn?t been tending to her own needs and does something drastic: she runs away and starts over again in a place where no one knows her or the mess she?s left behind in West Virginia. Heading to Sea Gull Island --- a tiny, remote Canadian island --- Clara is ready for anything. Well, almost. She left her passport back home, and the only way she can enter Canada is by hitching a ride on a snowmobile and illegally crossing the border.

Deciding to reinvent herself, Clara takes a new identity --- Sara Livingston, a writer seeking solitude. But there?s no avoiding the outside world. The residents are friendly, and draw ?Sara? into their lives and confidences. She volunteers at the local medical clinic, using her midwifery skills, and forms a tentative relationship with a local police officer.

But what will happen if she lets down her guard and reveals the real reason why she left her old life? One lesson soon becomes clear: no matter how far you run, you can never really hide from your past.

Questions for Discussion

1. Clara makes a bold decision to fly away from her life. Do you think she made the right choice? Why or why not? Are there any circumstances you could discuss where you may have wanted to make the same choice?

2. In running away, Clara decides to make a break not just from her practice and friendships but from her daughter, Jessie, who she feels doesn?t really need her any longer. Discuss whether or not Clara is justified in leaving her grown child behind.

3. Clara seems to fit in easily with the locals on Seagull Island. Why do you think they are so willing to accept her, a total stranger, and not accept the members of the local commune? Does it seem plausible to you that the island has such a ?long memory? for events that happened a dozen years ago?

4. The islanders call the commune members ?hippies,? a phrase that has fallen out of general use. In what ways are they still somewhat living in the past? In what ways are they perhaps more accepting than those who live on the mainland?

5. Do you think that the islanders are hiding from life by staying so connected to their island lifestyles? Or does the outside world encroach there more than perhaps they?d like to admit?

6. The prospect of a casino getting built on the island strikes dismay in the hearts of many of the residents. But would a casino be an entirely bad thing?

7. Is it possible the Nelson heirs are more practical than grasping? Is it necessarily wrong that they want to sell out?

8. How do you think the rest of the islanders will react to learning the truth about Clara, who they know as Sara? Do you think there?s a possibility that there are others living there who have deep secrets of their own?

9. Have you ever lived somewhere that is ?taken over? by summer people? Have you ever been a summer resident? How does that feel?

10. The death of Nita Adams was a touching part of the story. Is it realistic to think people can choose to die as they wish?

11. Did Rainbow?s home birth seem strange to you? Have you ever known anyone who gave birth at home with a midwife?

12. Clara ran away from her past, but discuss what you feel she may have also run toward in her journey.

Author Bio

Patricia Harman, CNM, got her start as a lay midwife on rural communes and went on to become a nurse-midwife on the faculties of Ohio State University, Case Western Reserve University, and West Virginia University. She is the author of two acclaimed memoirs and four novels: THE MIDWIFE OF HOPE RIVER, THE RELUCTANT MIDWIFE, THE RUNAWAY MIDWIFE and ONCE A MIDWIFE. She has three sons and lives near Morgantown, West Virginia.

The Runaway Midwife
by Patricia Harman

Publication Date: January 31, 2017
Genres: Fiction
Paperback: 416 pages
Publisher: William Morrow Paperbacks
ISBN-10: 0062467301
ISBN-13: 9780062467300