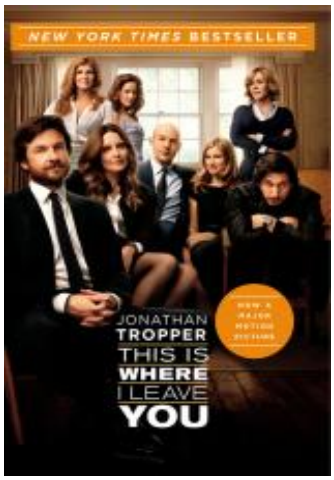
This Is Where I Leave You

by Jonathan Tropper



About the Book

The death of Judd Foxman?s father marks the first time that the entire Foxman clan has congregated in years. There is, however, one conspicuous absence: Judd?s wife, Jen, whose affair with his radio- shock-jock boss has recently become painfully public. Simultaneously mourning the demise of his father and his marriage, Judd joins his dysfunctional family as they reluctantly sit *shiva* --- and spend seven days and nights under the same roof. The week quickly spins out of control as longstanding grudges resurface, secrets are revealed and old passions are reawakened. Then Jen delivers the clincher: she?s pregnant. THIS IS WHERE I LEAVE YOU is Jonathan Tropper?s (ONE LAST THING BEFORE I GO) most accomplished work to date, and a riotously funny, emotionally raw novel about love, marriage, divorce, family and the ties that bind --- whether we like it or not.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss Judd Foxman, the novel?s protagonist, from his very ironic and dry sense of humor (shared also by his brothers and sister), to his anger and vulnerability regarding his wife?s infidelity, to his conflicted emotions regarding his immediate family. What was your first impression of the protagonist/narrator of this novel? What did you find the most engaging aspect of his character? Did you find any aspect of him off-putting?

2. What was your first impression of Judd?s wife, Jen? Because you see her almost entirely from Judd?s perspective, was there any chance to see her as a sympathetic character before Judd finds her so? Do you think that Judd and Jen have a chance at salvaging their relationship, with or without a baby girl to raise?

3. Discuss Judd?s mother and her relationship with each of her children. Do you think that Hillary Foxman was truly a bad mother? Was there any real irony in her being a child-rearing guru? What was your opinion of her character?

4. One of the largest subjects of the book is parenting. Discuss the various parents in the book (Judd and Jen; Wendy and

Barry; Hillary and Mort; Linda) and consider the statement (or statements) that Tropper makes about the responsibilities of a parent to his or her child, and, conversely, the responsibilities of a child to his or her parent.

5.Similarly, what comment is Tropper making about the role of trauma and tragedy in our lives? Almost every character in this book suffers or has suffered: Phillip from his neglected/overindulged childhood; Judd from his wife?s infidelity; Horry from his brain damage; Paul from the Rottweiler attack; Wendy from her unhappy marriage; and Alice from her infertility. What does their unhappiness, and the way each person copes with that unhappiness, teach us?

6. Most of the characters in this novel struggle against living up to an ideal established either by themselves or by a friend, family member or spouse. Judd fails to be the perfect husband, brother and son; Jen fails to be the perfect wife; Wendy fails to be the perfect mother; and Alice fails to become a mother at all. Mort and Hillary Foxman, it turns out, fail their children spectacularly in some ways while succeeding in others. What do the lives of these characters reveal to us about perfectionism, ideals, and our expectations for ourselves and others?

7. Also, compare and contrast the various romantic relationships in this book: who, do you think, had the most admirable or lasting relationship? Who had the most realistic one? Who had the most insurmountable problems? (Is there such a thing as an insurmountable problem, especially looking at problems from Phillip?s point of view?)

8. For all of their faults, is the Foxman clan a likeable group of people? What makes them an endearing group of people? Who did you like the most, and who did you find the least appealing, and why? Were there any characters you would have liked to see developed further?

9. Throughout the book Judd has recurring nightmares that often involve a prosthetic limb. Discuss the way these dreams acted as elements of foreshadowing and symbolism throughout the narrative. Consider, too, how they reflected Judd?s emotional state as the novel progresses.

10. What did you think of Judd?s exit at the end of the *shiva*? Was his disappearance in Phillip?s Porsche realistic? Appropriate? Did you find it a satisfying resolution to the book?

Author Bio

Jonathan Tropper is the author of ONE LAST THING BEFORE I GO, HOW TO TALK TO A WIDOWER, EVERYTHING CHANGES, THE BOOK OF JOE and PLAN B. He lives with his family in Westchester, New York, where he teaches writing at Manhattanville College. He is currently adapting THIS IS WHERE I LEAVE YOU as a feature film for Warner Brothers Studios and is an Executive Producer and co-creator of the Cinemax series ?Banshee.?

Critical Praise

?In a wry domestic tone nicely akin to Tom Perotta?s, Mr. Tropper?introduces a darkly entertaining bunch of dysfunctional relatives?This author?s strong suit is wisecracks, the more irreverent the better.?

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