

# Watch Me Disappear

by Janelle Brown

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## About the Book

The disappearance of a beautiful, charismatic mother leaves her family to piece together her secrets in this propulsive novel for fans of *BIG LITTLE LIES* --- from the bestselling author of *ALL WE EVER WANTED WAS EVERYTHING*.

*Who you want people to be makes you blind to who they really are.*

It's been a year since Billie Flanagan --- a Berkeley mom with an enviable life --- went on a solo hike in Desolation Wilderness and vanished from the trail. Her body was never found, just a shattered cell phone and a solitary hiking boot. Her husband and teenage daughter have been coping with Billie's death the best they can: Jonathan drinks as he works on a loving memoir about his marriage; Olive grows remote, from both her father and her friends at the all-girls school she attends.

But then Olive starts having strange visions of her mother, still alive. Jonathan worries about Olive's emotional stability, until he starts unearthing secrets from Billie's past that bring into question everything he thought he understood about his wife. Who was the woman he knew as Billie Flanagan?

Together, Olive and Jonathan embark on a quest for the truth --- about Billie, but also about themselves, learning, in the process, about all the ways that love can distort what we choose to see. Janelle Brown's insights into the dynamics of intimate relationships will make you question the stories you tell yourself about the people you love, while her nervy storytelling will keep you guessing until the very last page.

## Discussion Guide

1. Is it natural for a mother to want to leave her family sometimes, even if most don't act on it? How would the story be

different if Jonathan had been the one to disappear?

2. How do you think the author meant to portray Jonathan? Did his relationship with Harmony change the way you saw him?

3. Do you believe there was genuine love in Billie and Jonathan's marriage? To what extent is some degree of secrecy a normal, even necessary, part of a marriage?

4. Olive felt that she was receiving psychic messages from her missing mother. Do you think this really was something paranormal? Part of a mother-daughter bond? A neurological condition? Have you ever felt some kind of unexplained communication with a parent or child or someone you love? If so, did you experience it on your own --- as a dream or an experience of heightened intuition --- or with the help of a psychic medium, like the Sharon Parkins character in the novel?

5. How does Olive's growing self-awareness and the revelation that comes with it fit into the novel's larger theme of searching for one's true identity? Discuss the ways other characters have sought to discover --- or change --- their personas.

6. Throughout the novel, you get to see Billie through different perspectives --- from her daughter, her husband, her friends and more. After finishing the novel, do you feel like you know who Billie really is, or do you still find her to be a mystery?

7. Is Billie a classic femme fatale? Why or why not? Is she a feminist character?

8. As you read, there are clues that suggest different possible endings for Billie. Were you surprised by the ending? If you were, how did you think it would end and why?

9. How do you get to know someone who lies to themselves? Can you ever really know a person?

## Author Bio

Janelle Brown is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *ALL WE EVER WANTED WAS EVERYTHING* and *THIS IS WHERE WE LIVE*. An essayist and a journalist, she has written for *Vogue*, *The New York Times*, *Elle*, *Wired*, *Self*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Salon* and numerous other publications. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and their two children.

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