

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Consider the quotes that open each part of the book. What connects them? What relation do they have to each part of the story?
2. Consider the choice of narrator. How does the narrator shape our understanding of the contours of this story? How might the book be different if the narration switched off between Bailey and Hannah? Or even added in chapters from Owen?
3. In the prologue of the book, Hannah recalls that on their second date, Owen grilled her about the “could-have-been boys” of her past, “the men I’d left behind, the men who had left me.” (1) In what ways is Owen one of those “could-have-been boys”?
4. Discuss the message that Owen sends to Hannah before he disappears. What does Owen mean by “Protect her”? How does Hannah interpret Owen’s request? How would a different message have changed Owen’s intent and Hannah’s actions?
5. We learn early on that Hannah’s mother left her when she was young. How is this similar to and different from the absence of Bailey’s mother? How does it compare to the way Owen leaves Hannah and Bailey?
6. When Hannah picks Bailey up from school the day Owen disappears, Bailey comes out with “a needy look on her face that I don’t recognize.” (22) This is the first of the small but pivotal moments that transform Hannah and Bailey’s relationship. What are some of the other small moments in which they rely on each other?
7. Owen’s note to Bailey says, “You know what matters about me.” (23) What do you think this means? What would you hope that your loved ones would say are the things that matter about you?
8. Early on, Hannah compares Owen’s departure to that of her father leaving her mother: “Doesn’t that make me the same as her? Both of us putting our faith in someone else above everything else --- calling it love. What good is love, if this is where it leads you?” (45) At another point, she realizes that her belief in Owen will show her to be either a “steadfast partner or a complete fool.” (143) Discuss the relationship between faith and love, trust and foolishness.
9. In Austin, Hannah tells Bailey that she’s trying to protect her, to which Bailey responds, “But you can’t. That’s the thing. No one can protect me from this. So how about you agree to be the person who tells me the truth?” (112) What’s the relationship between the truth and protecting those we love? Can we do both, or are they mutually exclusive?
10. Hannah realizes that Owen isn’t running for just any reason, but that “he’s running from something he’s terrified of.” (150) Did you have any theories about what Owen was running from, and did the real



answer surprise you? What are some things that might make you drop everything and run the same way Owen did?

11. Grady tries to impress upon Hannah the reality of transitioning into WITSEC, outlining what she and Bailey would need to leave behind to start their new lives. Imagine what that might be like for you and your family. What names would you choose? What jobs, hobbies or identifying activities would you have to give up? How would you make a life for yourself?

12. How would you feel if you were asked to take care of someone else's child? In what circumstances might you say yes, or no? Owen placed immense trust in Hannah's making a specific decision. Was it, ultimately, warranted? Was it fair to even ask her?

