



Hello Goodbye

By Emily Chenoweth
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Introduction

In the summer after her freshman year of college, Abby Hansen embarks on what might be a final vacation with her parents to a historic resort in northern New Hampshire. The Presidential Hotel, with its stately rooms and old-fashioned dress code, seems almost unbearably stuffy to Abby, but the young, free-spirited hotel staff offers her the chance for new friendships, and maybe even romance.

However, for her parents, Elliott and Helen, their time spent together in the shadow of the White Mountains has taken on a deeper meaning. By inviting family friends to join them, they open their marriage up to a lifetime of confessions, and they must confront a secret about Helen's health that they have been hiding from their daughter.

Heartbreaking and luminous, *Hello Goodbye* deftly explores a family's struggle with love and loss, as a summer vacation becomes an occasion for awakening.

Questions for Discussion

1. How would you describe Abby's relationship with her mother and father? Do you feel she is closer to one parent than the other, or is she close to both in different ways?
2. Elliott and Helen are celebrating their twentieth wedding anniversary. How would you characterize their marriage? Do you think they have been happy together?
3. Out of the three members of the Hansen family, Elliott knows the most about Helen's condition. Is it right for him to keep information about Helen's condition from her? Does it make sense that Elliott and Helen keep information from Abby? What would you do if you were in a similar situation?
4. When Elliott is talking to Dr. Buxbaum, he mentions 'a happy death.' He says it's a joke, but how do the Hansens try to give Helen 'a happy death'? Do you think it is possible for a person to have 'a happy death'?
5. What are the different ways in which Elliott, Abby, and Helen herself cope with Helen's diagnosis? Is there any right or wrong way to deal with someone's illness?
6. Why do you think Elliott gets rid of Pig the cat after Helen falls ill? Is it just because Pig has grown difficult to take care of, or is there something more behind this decision?
7. What does Abby see in Alex? What does she see in Vic? Which boy do you think she should have ended up with, and why?
8. Elliott is briefly attracted to Sylvia, the wife of his friend Neil. Did you find him sympathetic in this moment? What do you think he is really looking for in his interaction with Sylvia?
9. What do you think Elliott and Abby's lives will be like after Helen dies? How do you think Helen's sickness contributes to Abby's growth as a young woman?
10. Were you ever close to someone who was nearing the end of their life? How did you handle this?

About the Author

Emily Chenoweth is a former fiction editor of *Publishers Weekly*. Her work has appeared in *Tin House*, *Bookforum*, and *People*, among other publications. She lives in Portland, Oregon.