



Up at Butternut Lake

By Mary McNear
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Questions for Discussion

1. Allie is torn between grieving for her deceased husband, Gregg, and falling in love with Walker. Is there an acceptable amount of time to grieve for a loved one? Must Allie stop grieving in order to move forward in her life?
2. Allie abruptly ends the relationship with Walker after Caitlin shows up at his house. She tells Walker she needs to protect Wyatt from the uncertainties of their relationship. Does she do the right thing? Is she simply protecting Wyatt? Or is there more to it than that? Is her reaction unreasonable?
3. After living in the cabin on Butternut Lake for only a couple of months, Wyatt tells Allie it feels like "home." What makes a place "home"? Does time have anything to do with it?
4. Why does Allie owe it to Gregg to remember him? How does Allie balance remembering Gregg and enjoying her new life with Walker?
5. Jax deceives Jeremy twice. First she fails to tell him that Joy is Bobby's daughter. Later she doesn't tell him that she's withdrawn ten thousand dollars to pay off Bobby. Is a lie of omission—especially a big one—just as reprehensible as an outright lie?
6. Bobby's appearance in town is an opportunity for Jax to come clean and tell Jeremy the truth. But she doesn't. Does Jax believe that Jeremy will no longer love her if he knows the truth? How does Jax underestimate Jeremy's love for her? And how might her own unhappy childhood have compelled her to deceive him?
7. Jeremy knows from the beginning that Joy is not his daughter. Should he have told Jax when Joy was born that he knew the truth but loved them both anyway? By not doing so, was he complicit in Jax's deception?
8. What does Caitlin's nightgown symbolize for Walker? Is his inability to send the nightgown back to Caitlin or just throw it out a sign that there is unfinished business between them?
9. When Caitlin tells Walker that she's pregnant, he admits he's not really father material. He then remembers his troubled relationship with his own father. To what extent does your relationship with your own parents influence your capacity for parenting?
10. It's clear that Walker doesn't love Caitlin when she arrives at the boatyard to tell him she's pregnant. In fact, he acknowledges to himself that they have very little in common. So does he do the right thing when he asks her to marry him? Is he just postponing the inevitable? And to what extent is Walker responsible for the marriage not working?
11. When Caitlin miscarries, both she and Walker grieve over the loss of their child. How does each express this loss? And how is this loss different than the death of Allie's husband?
12. Caroline helps to bring Jax and Jeremy back together, she encourages Allie to give Walker a chance, and she hires Frankie when no one else would. What role does she play in the novel?
13. Daisy is aware that her mother is lonely and prods her to join a book club or go on a date. But, as Caroline realizes, she has lost the ability to take risks. Why would being a single working parent make Caroline risk averse?
14. Despite the fact that Frankie killed a man in self-defense, he takes on the role of protector several times. Who are the people he protects in the novel?