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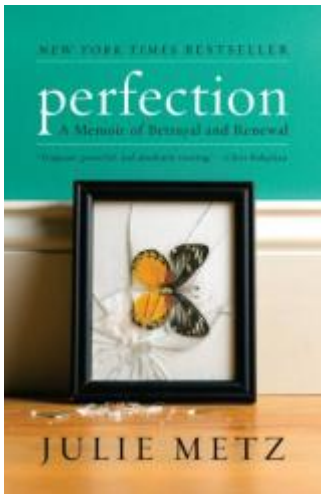
Perfection: A Memoir of Betrayal and Renewal

by Julie Metz



About the Book

Julie Metz had seemingly the perfect life --- an adoring husband, a happy, spirited daughter, a lovely old house in a quaint suburban town --- but it was all a lie.

Julie Metz's life changed forever on one ordinary January afternoon when her husband, Henry, collapsed on the kitchen floor and died in her arms. Suddenly, this mother of a six-year-old became the young widow in her bucolic small town. But that was only the beginning. Seven months after Henry's death, just when Julie thought she was emerging from the worst of it, came the rest of it: She discovered that what had appeared to be the reality of her marriage was but a half-truth. Henry had hidden another life from her.

PERFECTION is the story of Metz's journey through chaos and transformation as she creates a different life for herself and for her young daughter. It is the story of rebuilding both a life and an identity after betrayal and widowhood, of rebirth and happiness --- if not perfection.

Discussion Guide

1. How does the author’s voice change as the book progresses? What does that tell the reader about her emotional state?

2. How does the book’s structure show the changes Julie experiences?

3. Have you ever witnessed a death, lived through the death of a person close to you, or watched a friend or relative cope with grief? How do your experiences compare to Julie’s? How do you think our culture copes with death?

4. What is the symbolism of food throughout the book? What did food mean to Henry? What does it mean to Julie and to her daughter Liza? What does umami mean to you?

5. The events in this story take place in a small town. How does this environment affect Julie? How does she respond to other environments in the book: France, Italy, Maine, and New York City? What is the impact of your own environment on your life? What role does travel play in the healing process?

6. Have you experienced betrayal in a relationship? How did you cope with this? If you have not experienced this directly, how do you think you might cope?

7. How do you feel about the relationships Julie has after Henry's death?

8. How is Julie's sense of family affected by Henry's death? How does this understanding of family change?

9. How does Julie's definition of love change over the course of the book? How do you define love?

10. What do you make of Professor Symons' evolutionary analysis of human mating behavior? How do you see the differences between men and women?

11. Do you think that times of crisis have their hidden benefits? What do you think Julie learns from her experiences? How does it affect her life as a woman, mother, and artist?

12. What do you think are the various meanings of the title? What does the word "Perfection" mean to you?

Author Bio

Julie Metz

BIO

Julie Metz is a graphic designer, artist, and freelance writer whose essays have appeared in publications including *Glamour* and *Hemispheres* magazines and the online story site mrbellersneighborhood.com. The recipient of a MacDowell Fellowship, she lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her daughter and partner. Learn more at www.everywomansvoice.com/perfection.

Critical Praise

[Ms. Metz] brings refreshing candor to a startling, painful tale.

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