

# Once You Know

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**Once you know something, you can't unknow it.**

In the dry heat of her Arizona home, feisty, Irish-Catholic Colleen Moretti thrust the letter into the back of a drawer. Her plan: ignore the fault line until the tremors pass. But her husband's betrayal is far worse than Colleen suspects.

With two daughters caught in the middle of a crumbling marriage, one who would love to see her father cut out of their lives and the other who would be crushed to lose him, Colleen is trapped in a no-win situation. Devastated, angry, and ashamed, she tries desperately to forgive her husband. Can Colleen mend her shattered heart and their broken home?

Colleen finally realizes she can't save her daughters, her marriage, *and* herself, so...who will she choose?

## BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Colleen's reactions when she first becomes suspicious that her husband may be having an affair show that she has a great capacity for denial. In what ways does her denial help her cope? How does it make her situation worse? How do you personally feel about denial as a coping mechanism?
2. Colleen's daughter Rachel judges her harshly for carrying on a pretense that the family is intact when Rachel's father has actually moved out of the house. Colleen does this for her daughter Izzy's sake and is torn because she cannot fulfill both Izzy's needs and Rachel's desires. Do you agree with Rachel's criticism of her mother, or do you have more sympathy for Colleen's decision? What options do we have when we're caught in the middle of people we love?
3. Colleen's friendship with her older friend Pat plays a major role in the story. How did learning about Pat's situation initially impact Colleen? Pat made a momentous decision during the ice storm. How did you react to her decision?
4. The idea of family secrets is central to the plot of this book. Is it sometimes better not to know the truth? Not to disclose the truth? How do you decide?
5. Throughout the story, the question of what forgiveness is and whether it is always possible to forgive is raised. Rachel argues that some things are unforgivable; Colleen says we should forgive for our own sakes so that anger doesn't eat away at us; the priest in Arizona tells Colleen that forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling; and in his sermon, the priest back home argues that forgiveness is an act of compassion. How do you define forgiveness? Do you believe that some things are unforgivable, or that sometimes it's better to withhold forgiveness? How do you decide when to forgive?
6. At one point, Colleen's husband Derek expresses the idea that everyone is more than—and better than—the worst thing they have ever done. Colleen makes some valiant attempts to see Derek as more than the hurt he's caused. How possible do you think it is to keep both good and bad aspects of someone we love in mind? How possible is it to focus on the good, and, in so doing, control the emotions we feel towards them?
7. Derek longs for understanding and compassion from his wife and daughter. To what extent did you feel able to extend compassion to him? Is there anything he might have said or done that would have increased your empathy? When we do feel empathy towards people whose actions we abhor, what triggers it?
8. The recent events of the *Me Too* movement form the backdrop to this novel. Along with the class on gender and violence, the movement influences Rachel and Aaron. How does their heightened awareness of these contemporary issues impact their relationship, for better or for worse? What are some challenges young adults today face related to sexuality and sexual intimacy?