



“Desperation, greed, scandal, and murder—a smart
and compulsive read with a thrilling ending.”

—MARY KUBICA, author of *The Good Girl* and *Every Last Lie*

THE NIGHT IN QUESTION

A NOVEL

NIC JOSEPH

READING GROUP GUIDE

1. What factors led to Paula's decision to blackmail Ryan Hooks? If you were in Paula's financial situation, what would you do with Hooks's phone?
2. Why do you think Paula jumped to conclusions about the relationship between Ryan and Emma? What clues did she miss? How did the memories of her mother's illness and her parents' relationship affect Paula's decision-making? How did it affect Paula and Keith's relationship?
3. Why do you think Keith was against having the surgery? Why was Paula pushing for it? What do you think caused this disconnect in their relationship?
4. Why do you think Emma fascinated Paula? How are the two women different? Similar?
5. After everything Paula did, Claire seems to trust her more than she trusts Emma Bentley, following the interrogations. Why do you think that is?

THE NIGHT IN QUESTION

6. Describe Paula's relationship with the truth. How was she able to convince herself that it was okay to lie to her family and friends?
7. Do you think it's ever okay to lie to someone you love? Explain.
8. Is Paula a good person?

A CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR

Where did you get the inspiration for *The Night in Question*?

I take *a lot* of rideshares. One day, I was chatting with a driver about all the things he'd seen during his brief stint as a driver. He laughed and said I wouldn't believe some of the stories. He looked up at me in the rearview mirror as he said this, and that's a scene that made it into *The Night in Question*. I took out my phone during that ride and made a note to explore a story about a rideshare driver who saw something she shouldn't have seen. It spiraled from there.

I love writing and reading stories about good people who convince themselves that it's okay to do bad things. I think those kinds of stories are easy to relate to because we've all been in tough spots where we had to make a choice about what kind of person we were going to be in that moment. Paula makes a bad choice and must deal with the consequences of that decision.

Do you think Paula is a likable character?

I do! I think readers may vary in their reactions to her choices, but I think they'll see that she, at the very least, *thinks* she's doing her best. She's convinced herself that she and her husband need the money much more than Ryan Hooks does and that what she's

doing isn't all that bad. Not great, certainly, but not *unforgivable*. That's important to her.

Why are so many of your books based in Chicago and/or the Midwest?

Chicago is a vibrant and diverse city with so much to do and learn every single day. It's also my home—I've lived here for all but three years of my life. I grew up in the south suburbs, went to graduate school in the north suburbs, and currently live in the city. While a little part of it is "writing what you know," it's no secret that Chicago has always been an amazing backdrop for crime, mystery, and suspense, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to add my voice to that.

Have you ever stopped writing a novel halfway through?

No, I haven't. That's because I rarely get halfway through a story without knowing where the rest of it is going to go. I am a heavy outliner, so I have a good sense of how a story is going to turn out by the time I've written the first chapter. I often put stories away for a while and come back to them, just to give them some time to breathe. But my unfinished manuscripts tend to be pages long, not chapters.

So how many (brief) unpublished books do you have in a drawer somewhere?

It's hard to say! Probably ten to fifteen, in various stages. I haven't given up on them yet!

When you develop characters, do you already know who they are before you begin writing, or do you let them develop as you go?

I know the basics about them when I start writing—their primary

motivations, their backgrounds, their hobbies. But I definitely like to let them grow and develop along the way. A scene near the end of the book might give me a clue about how a character would react to something earlier in the novel, and I'll go back and add in a detail. It's fun to be able to watch characters come to life during the writing (and even editing) process.

What are some of the common themes in your work?

My suspense novels are *very* family-driven, with the major conflict often centering around relationships between parents and children, siblings, and spouses. I think that's because it's our deepest relationships that test us the most. Those are the ones we'll risk everything for and for which we'll put everything on the line.

What writing habits are you trying to break?

Writing stories in my head while I'm in the middle of a conversation...humor that borders on snark...oh, and overusing ellipses...!