

Book Club Discussion Guide

- 1) In the Credo chapter the author writes, “The magician’s assistant is perhaps the biggest mystery of all.” How is that relevant to the story?
- 2) The definition of magic is this: “Removed from everyday life, delightfully unusual, having a mysterious or supernatural quality.” In the Grabel household the word magic meant something different than what it meant to other people. What did the word magic mean in the Grabels?
- 3) Discuss Katy and Lee’s attraction to fame. Why do they both want it? When the magic show comes along, why does Katy abandon her dream of being a rock n’ roll star? How does she respond to being a magician’s assistant?
- 4) What is Helen’s part in family dynamics? What challenges does she face in helping Lee with this big dream? If you were Helen how would you have handled the situation?
- 5) The reader follows the arc of Katy’s and Lee’s dream from its inception when Lee see’s the Doug Henning show, to the mobilization of the magic show and all the way to the one Las Vegas show. Discuss what it takes to make a big dream come true and if Lee did everything he could. What personal examples do you have of something you really wanted that didn’t work out despite your efforts? Can a dream ask for too much? In what way does Lee kinda get what he wants?
- 6) What is real magic to Katy?
- 7) At the end of the book how does Katy change? Her relationship to her dreams, her invisible crowds, her father...? Has Lee changed?
- 8) There is a common maxim in show business: *The Show Must Go On!* How does this play out in the story? What does Katy learn from this?
- 9) What characters did you like best or least? Discuss the role Brody plays. How is he a threat to the big dream if at all? Is Lee Grabel tenacious or darkly driven? In what ways is he an obstacle to his own big dream?
- 10) Because the book is about magic, the author uses language with a magical sparkly feel to it. Do any parts stand out? Do you have a favorite quote?
- 11) “My father could never have stopped this venture, even if he’d wanted to. No one chooses to be a magician. It chooses whom it chooses.” What does that mean to you? Have you ever been that passionate about something? Do you know anyone who has?” Is it a curse or a blessing?

- 12) What do you think of Lee and Helens marriage?
- 13) What does the Reader's Digest article symbolize in the story? Discuss the story that Katy really wants to tell. How do Katy and Lee look at the show differently? Why is it important that Katy tell her story?
- 14) Assistants tend to be under-appreciated in our celebrity culture — everyone wants to be a star. However, every front person has a support staff. Discuss whether being an assistant to a public figure means squelching your own dreams? What was Helen's "secret power" as an assistant? Lee wants to appear all powerful, yet he is totally dependent on his off-stage help to do so. Discuss this contradiction.
- 15) Secrets are important in the operation of a magic show. As the author revealed her father's magic tricks, she waited till he was dead before publishing the book. If you authored a memoir with information that would hurt another, what would you do? How would you make that decision?