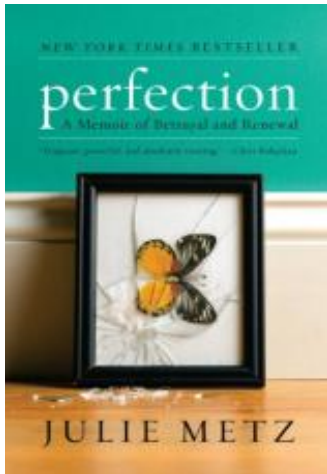


Perfection: A Memoir of Betrayal and Renewal

by Julie Metz



About the Book

In the aftermath of her husband's death, one woman discovers her life has been a lie.

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

"He loved you so much." That's what everyone keeps telling her. It's true that he loved Julie and their six-year-old daughter ebulliently and devotedly, but as she starts to pick up the pieces and rebuild her life without Henry in it, she learns that Henry had been unfaithful throughout their twelve years of marriage. The most damaging affair was ongoing --- a tumultuous relationship that ended only with Henry's death. For Julie, the only thing to do was to get at the real truth --- to strip away the veneer of "perfection" that was her life and confront each of the women beneath the veneer.

Perfection is the story of Julie Metz's journey through chaos and transformation as she creates a different life for herself and her young daughter. It is the story of coming to terms with painful truths, of rebuilding both a life and an identity after betrayal and widowhood. It is a story 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 is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *PERFECTION* and *EVA AND EVE*. She has written for publications including *The New York Times*, *Salon*, *Dame*, *Redbook* and *Glamour*. She has received fellowships at Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and The Vermont Studio Center. She lives with her family and two cats in the Hudson Valley.

Critical Praise

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

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