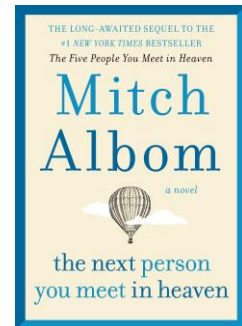


The Next Person You Meet in Heaven

Harper

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1. Why are endings often so difficult and challenging? What's a healthy balance between staying connected and moving on?
2. What does Annie understand as a nurse that many people may not?
3. Central to Annie's story and her feelings about herself are supposed mistakes. What constitutes a mistake? In what contexts or situations are they allowable or even necessary?
4. What is Annie's distant connection to Sameer? How is it that we can be connected to people we have never met? Who might you be distantly connected to?
5. Sameer "chose to flip [his] human existence" and confront the thing he feared most. What stops many people from doing this while alive?
6. Throughout the story, vibrant colors are described. What do such details add? Why are they important to the subject?
7. Consider Annie's mother, Lorraine. In what ways was she a good mother or not? What influence did Annie's father have on the two of them?
8. How is it that Cleo, a dog, can be one of the most important "people" in Annie's life? What makes dogs such good potential companions for humans? What are the limitations to the powerful relationships with a pet?
9. What is the potential value of loneliness? What determines when it becomes debilitating or dangerous?
10. Paulo believes Annie's injury makes her unique in a valuable way, while she laments being so different. What's the difference between different or unique? Why is difference in others so often shunned, while most people seem to want to be individuals themselves?
11. Lorraine tries to teach Annie about the danger of keeping secrets: "We think by keeping them, we're controlling things, but all the while, they're controlling us." What does she mean? How is it that secrets can be unhealthy? Are held secrets helpful?
12. Annie was named after a courageous woman who, at age 63, went over Niagara Falls in a barrel. What *is* courage? How is it different from bravery or recklessness?

13. After learning more about her mother's difficult choices, Annie forgives her. How does forgiveness work for both people involved? How is forgiveness not just a free pass for someone who has done harm?
14. Consider how Eddie helps Annie work through the tragic accident that took his life. Why does Annie feel at fault? What is the tension between fault and responsibility?
15. Paulo explains to Annie that, "you lose something every day you live." What does he mean? What is the healthiest way to experience loss?
16. "Winds blew" is offered several times as an explanation for why painful things happened. What does this mean? To what extent and in what ways is life experience the result of predetermined fate or a person's own choices?