

### The Reading Guide

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#### Reading Group Questions

1. A shocking event occurs at the beginning of the book. How does this affect your reading of the rest of the story? Do you think it's really necessary to the plot?
2. Female bonds are at the core of the novel and the male characters are merely incidental. Do you agree with this statement?
3. Why do you think the author chose to have Helen living in France? How would the novel have worked if she'd lived in another part of the UK? Or in another country?
4. What role do you think Tom plays within the book?
5. To what extent is this a novel about corruption of both mind and body?
6. What does this novel say about family and "sisterhood"?
7. The novel is told by several different voices: Mary, Liz and Helen. What effect does this have on the storytelling process?

#### Further Reading

*Backpack* – Emily Barr

*Perfect Family* – Pam Lewis

*Speak Softly, She Can Hear* – Pam Lewis

*The Secret History* – Donna Tartt

#### About the Book

Elizabeth Greene is devastated when her boyfriend of ten years leaves her for someone else. After a night of drowning her sorrows leads to an unexpected one-night stand, Elizabeth finds herself pregnant, alone and vulnerable.

Helen has just discovered she has a sister she didn't know she had. Bored with her privileged life in France and driven by a need to gain her parents' approval, Helen sets out to find her sister and reunite her with her long-lost mother. When her search leads her to Elizabeth the two women become closely linked. But their connection to one another is founded on a dark deception, with the truth having extreme consequences...

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**About the Author**

Emily Barr has written columns and travel pieces for the *Observer* and the *Guardian* for several years, and her previous novels have all been highly acclaimed. She met her husband while backpacking in Asia and they later moved to France with their children. She has recently returned to England and is now settled in Cornwall with her family.

**Reviews**

'A great read from start to finish...believable characters that are variously biting, insightful and sympathetic' *The Times*

'Emily Barr has pulled off this compelling story of what happens when things become too Single White Female so effectively, we're thinking maybe her best friend should start to watch her back' *Heat*

**Reader Reviews**

"By the second half of the book, I was fighting against sleep, because I just had to find out what was going to happen next!"

Michelle

"This is Emily Barr's greatest book to date. Being both witty and dark it was impossible to put down. The chapters flowed effortlessly as the story unfolded. I loved it."

A reader on Amazon

"I've enjoyed a lot of Emily Barr's novels, but this one seems like a real step forward. It's chilling and gripping, but also funny and hard to put down. I will definitely be buying her next one!"

A reader on Amazon

"I have enjoyed all Emily Barr's books but this one is her best. I read it as fast as I could and couldn't put it down."

A reader on Amazon