

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As the book opens, Mallory Wingate has experienced a minor nervous breakdown, a collapse or meltdown from the excessive stress in her life over the last two years. What stress factors led to this collapse? What treatment was advised? Why is Mallory on her way to her grandparents' resort? Have you or anyone you've know ever experienced a breakdown?
2. In an odd twist of fate Lucas James happened to be on the same flight to Tennessee as Mallory, returning from a pro golf event. How did they first meet? What did you learn about Lucas and Mallory and their personalities in these scenes on the airplane? How did a friendship—and perhaps a little more—develop between them on their flight home?
3. Book titles are often drawn from events or scenes in a book and can actually form running themes within the story. Where do you think the title THE INTERLUDE came from in this book? Did Lucas or Mallory ever expect to see each other again after their chance meeting? Where did they next meet? How did the book title, THE INTERLUDE, and its theme play out again in other parts of the story?
4. Although Lucas was initially attracted to Mallory, why did he not want to pursue a relationship with her after they meet again? Do you think he was justified in his concerns? Besides the fact that Mallory was his boss's granddaughter, what past factors in Lucas' life made him wary of getting involved with anyone with mental problems? Did he equate his past problems with his wife Cecily to his concerns about Mallory correctly?
5. Friends and family members can have both good and bad influences in our lives. How did Lucas's sister Elizabeth help both Mallory and Lucas? What things did you learn about Elizabeth and Robert as the book moved along? Did you like them? Did you enjoy the book scenes involving Abby and Suzannah? How did time with Suzannah also help Mallory?
6. The setting for this book is in the Greenbrier and Pittman Center area of the Great Smoky Mountains, a lovely, scenic region about halfway between Gatlinburg and Cosby. Have you ever visited in that area of the Smokies? The Millhouse Resort in the book is fictitious but it is based on beautiful resorts of this type scattered around the mountains. Have you ever stayed on a resort like the one depicted in this novel? Many places in this book can actually be found in this area—the Emerts Cove Covered Bridge, the Glen Cardwell Heritage Museum, the Ramsay Cascades Trail, and more. Do you enjoy books that introduce you to real places you can visit—or remind you of past visits?
7. Looking at other characters in the story, what did you like about Beau and Nonnie Wingate? What was the history of their resort? What was Beau's title at the resort and what attributes made him a good leader? What types of groups did Nonnie host for luncheons at the Butterfly Tea Room? How had Beau and Nonnie become closely involved with Lucas and his little daughter Suzannah? What had happened to their only son?

8. Lucas wasn't the only one with personal problems in his background. What sort of problems had Mallory known with her mother Delores Wingate? Do you think Delores was a good mother to Mallory and a good wife to Jarrett? When you heard Mallory tell Beau and Nonnie more about Delores's early life, did it make you like Delores more or less? What advice did Delores give Mallory about men that might have caused relational issues for Mallory? What illness brought Delores to live with Mallory?

9. Mental and emotional issues are a running theme in this book, highlighting the fact that people can be unkind or lack understanding about individuals who experience emotional problems. Why do you think that is? Do you know much about the history of mental illness and how people with disorders were viewed and treated in the past? Did you learn more about mental and emotional health concerns while reading this book and how they impact not only the one suffering with them but those around them? What mental illnesses and emotional problems were depicted in this book?

10. Fun coincidences in this book, just as in real life, occur to draw Mallory and Lucas closer together, like meeting on the airplane, again at the resort, or running into each other in the cemetery later. When Lucas walks Mallory to the garden gate to say goodnight one night, he asks her about the name of the flowering shrub beside the gate, knowing her grandmother taught her the names of most of the flowers at the resort. Why did Mallory hedge to tell him the flower's name? What happened when she did? Can you recall any random coincidences in your life like these?

11. Suzannah becomes a major character in this story. What did you most enjoy about this child? How did she help to encourage a relationship between Mallory and Lucas? What scenes did you most enjoy that included Suzannah? Have you noticed in your own life how children can often honestly and guilelessly express the things adults are reluctant to put into words? How did Suzannah sometimes do this? Did you or a child you know well ever have a favorite doll like EdithAnn they insisted on taking almost everywhere?

12. Several women's groups meet regularly in Nonnie Wingate's Butterfly Tea Room. Do you remember the names of some of the clubs and civic groups that met there? The twelve women in the little Monday Group, including Nonnie, had been friends for many years. Tilly Walker is a member of this group. What was Tilly like? Why did she and her husband Bobby Joe divorce? Was Tilly happy about that? Mallory remembers Tilly, even after many years as "the ditz, a slightly neurotic and self-absorbed worrier." Beau called her "a silly, emotional sort of female, worrying over something all the time, seeing trouble behind every door." Are these descriptions accurate? How did these traits and other health issues escalate into real trouble for Tilly—and for Mallory and Suzannah? What factors about Tilly's personality and ways remind you of people you know?

13. Mallory has had a minor breakdown as this book begins, but as the story continues you learn Lucas is having emotional problems of his own. What problems is Lucas experiencing? As the book begins, is Lucas aware of them? How do they affect his relationships with others and especially with Mallory? What situation brings Lucas's problem to the attention of his boss? What does Beau demand Lucas do? What happens

later in Lucas's sessions with Perry Ammons? Did you like Perry and how he counseled? Would you like to have a counselor like this if you had problems?

14. Three types of thefts are going on in this story and the main characters soon begin to wonder who is behind each—the same people or different ones? The first theft resolved is at the golf pro shop. What theft happened there and who was responsible? The second theft uncovered is at the tearoom. Who was behind those small thefts? Finally, an understanding of the criminals behind the car thefts is identified. Who stumbles upon those thieves accidentally? Did you guess the identity of any of these mysteries before they were revealed in the book?

15. How Jarrett Wingate—Mallory's father—died is another mystery in this book. How was Jarrett killed? What did the police investigation at the time conclude? Gladys stirs up questions in Mallory's mind about her father's death, and later Lucas finding the tin box at Chessy Bohanan's cabin, creates more questions. What was in the box? What item in that box proved to be most condemning? What happens when Mallory later goes to the old cabin to look for more clues? How does this finally resolve the mystery of Jarrett's death as well as the mystery of the car thefts ongoing?

16. Lucas's and Mallory's relationship bounced up and down through the book. How did Lucas's response after the incident at the Bohanan cabin prove the last straw to Mallory in continuing to foster hope that their relationship would grown into more? When Lucas flies out west to play in a charity golf tournament, he comes home to immediately go to Mallory, hoping to further restore their problems. But Mallory is not there. Where has she gone?

17. Several characters in Savannah played critical roles in this book—David Whittier and Nancy Franklin at Whittier Publishing and Ethan Broussard, Mallory's former love interest. What did you think of each? How were David and Nancy a support to Mallory throughout the story? How was Ethan Broussard the opposite? What did Ethan do that convinced Mallory she wanted no further relationship with him? How did he persist in trying to win Mallory after she left Savannah and even after she returned?

18. How did this story end and how did Lucas and Mallory get together again? What part did Suzannah play in that? How did David Whittier help resolve the issue about Mallory's work with his company? Did you feel that everything resolved to your satisfaction in this story?