



How the Light Gets In

A NOVEL

JOLINA
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Discussion Questions

1. This novel asks significant questions about marriage and commitment. How do you feel about the answers Ruth comes up with? How might your choices have differed from hers?
2. Ruth and Chandler are probably a typical couple whose jobs and children cause them to move apart emotionally, even before they are physically separated. Have you experienced a similar challenge in your marriage, or have you seen this happen to people you know? What could they have done differently to prevent this estrangement?
3. Elam set aside his dreams of marriage and family because the circumstances were never right for it. Do you have dreams that have yet to be fulfilled or that you've had to set aside for a season? How did Elam keep from growing bitter at having his dream deferred? What can we learn from his example?

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4. Chandler is doing good, important work in the world, and yet his family suffers for it. Have you ever been in this situation? What are some ways we can discern the right priorities for our various commitments and obligations?
5. Did you enjoy learning a little about cranberry harvesting? What was particularly interesting or surprising about it?
6. Did you enjoy reading Ruth and Chandler's letters to each other in the years before this story takes place? Did they enhance the story for you, or did you find them distracting?
7. How did you react when Ruth chose between Chandler and Elam? Was it the choice you wanted her to make? Why or why not?
8. What was your reaction to the conclusion of the story? Did you find it satisfying or frustrating? Why do you think the author chose to tell the story this way?
9. Why do you think Ruth chooses this strategy to work out her loss? What does she gain by it? Does it seem like a realistic way to process grief?
10. Good novels often present what feel like "no-win" moral dilemmas. Can you pose another way that Ruth's

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novel might have played out? Another way you would have preferred? Why?

11. Which characters in the book have a “happy ending”? Is that good enough for you, or do you wish the author had resolved things differently? How do you see things unfolding for the characters in the months and years ahead?
12. The author used the biblical book of Ruth as a stepping-off point for this fictional story. What similarities did you see? What are some of the differences? How do you feel about using Bible events as the basis for fiction?