

## STORIES WE NEVER TOLD

by Sonja Yoerg

### Discussion Questions

1. Jealousy is a powerful emotion with potential for hurt or even destruction. Could you sympathize with Jackie's jealousy of Nasira? How did Jackie's jealousy play into Harlan's hands? If you have experienced intense jealousy, or been the target of it, how did you cope with it?
2. Jackie and Harlan become friends after their break-up, in part because they are colleagues. When Jackie starts dating Miles, the men develop a friendship. Are friendships between exes tenable? What does it take to be able to move from intimacy to friendship?
3. Even when Harlan was in charge of the narrative, he didn't tip his hand right away. When did you begin to suspect he was out to get Jackie? Did you foresee the extent of his vengefulness? Do you think Jackie should've suspected him sooner?
4. Grace is more grounded and content than her sister, Jackie. Is this a personality difference or the result of being younger and not experiencing their parents' conflict in the same way? What role do you think having a career outside the home plays in the difference between the sisters' lives?
5. Nasira is the first of the four main characters to tell her story. How did it change the way you viewed her, if at all? How did her estrangement from her parents affect her susceptibility to Harlan?
6. What did you think of Jackie and Miles's marriage early in the book? Were you worried for them, or suspect something else was amiss? At the end, do you expect them to stay friends?
7. Jackie's mother, Cheryl, is entrenched in the past but Jackie finds a way to respect and even admire her. Did this surprise you? How does Cheryl's status as a working mother factor in this and, more generally, what do you think about changing relationships between mothers and daughters as women struggle to "have it all"?
8. Imagine if Jackie had remained content with her circumscribed relationship with Harlan, never asking for more. Do they think the relationship would have lasted? Why or why not? Harlan claimed he loved her more than anyone. What does that mean, given what you know about him?
9. Step-parenting is never easy. What did you think of Jackie's role as Antonio's stepmom? Did Miles ask too much of her? Not enough? Jackie wondered whether Antonio's knowledge of his father's sexuality might have been a barrier in the stepmom-stepson relationship; what's your take?
10. The stories reveal salient background information about the characters that reframe how you think about them. Behind the stories themselves is the idea that we all hold part of ourselves in reserve and thereby resist the ability of others to fully understand us. Is this true? Does everyone have a story they never told?