

Discussion Questions

All This Could Be Yours by Jami Attenberg

1. Talk about the damage Victor Tuchman has inflicted on his family. The details are parceled out, piece by piece, character by character: why might Jami Attenberg have used this particular narrative technique rather than reveal the damage outright?
2. What kind of person is Victor? How would you describe him? Even more important, what kind of people has his cruelty created?
3. Consider each of the family members: Barbara, Victor's wife; Gary, the son, who remains in Los Angeles; and Alex, the daughter. What are your thoughts about each of the characters: do they elicit your sympathy, pity, admiration, dislike, impatience?
4. Alex, on the treadmill in her hotel (unpack that symbol!) "loathed herself, forgave herself. She loathed them, she did not forgive them. She ran." But then the scene ends with Alex raising her arms in supposed "victory." Why "victory"?
5. Barbara accepted a devil's bargain: She'd keep [Victor's] secrets and ask for nothing but objects." Why had she remained with Victor over the years? To what extent is she culpable, or not, in Victor's behavior?
6. Gary, in L.A., is receiving a massage for his troublesome neck pain, which he labels Twyla, in his wife's honor. He thinks, "I'm garbage." Why?
7. Speaking of Twyla, how would you describe her ... and the couple's marriage? Why is Twyla so unnerved? Why has her in-laws' move to New Orleans disrupted her contented life with Gary and their daughter Avery?
8. Do you have hope for Alex, Barbara, Gary, and Twyla? Are they capable of change—can they become different people once he dies? All of which brings up a question posed by the novel: if you can't forget, can you forgive? (What's the difference... is there a difference?)

(Questions by LitLovers)