



## The Perfect Play

By Louise Wener  
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### Introduction

Playing the cards life has dealt her has left Audrey Unger anxious, obsessive, and without a sense of direction. Audrey's professional poker-playing father left her and her mother behind when she was eleven, his only explanation a scribbled matchbook that advised "one day you'll understand this was probably for the best." Now, about to turn thirty-three and poised on the edge of her own midlife crisis, Audrey makes the decision to try and find him. She's prepared to risk everything in her attempt to understand him, and to finally ask what made him choose poker over his only daughter.

Big Louie is the key to her father's gambling world -- as well as an agoraphobic, ill-tempered card genius who hasn't left his apartment in more than two years! Fighting his own phobias, he takes Audrey on a journey of self-discovery, guiding her through the subtleties of professional poker and igniting her passion for the thrill of high stakes gambling that her father found so alluring. Shuffling a

hand that includes an overprotective boyfriend, twin magician stepbrothers and a Las Vegas con man, Audrey is propelled to play a final game of poker that will change her life forever.

### Questions for Discussion

1. How would you describe Audrey Unger's relationship with her long-term boyfriend, Joe? What keeps these two characters together?
2. How did *The Perfect Play's* humorous narrative tone affect your appreciation of the novel's characters and their unusual situations?
3. Did you find Big Louie entirely trustworthy? What aspects of his character most intrigued you?
4. To what extent is Audrey's ongoing friendship with Big Louie about filling the gap created by her father's disappearance?
5. Over the course of *The Perfect Play*, how does Audrey come to inhabit her father's gambling persona and understand him better?
6. Did you feel that Audrey's turn as "mechanic" in the game against Karl/Balloon Boy was ethical? To what extent was it justified?
7. "I liked the challenge and the order and the symmetry, and the prospect of finding the perfect play." How does this novel convey the intellectual, emotional, and utterly irrational aspects of gambling?
8. How does the game Audrey plays in Las Vegas serve to liberate Big Louie, and how does it manage to liberate her?
9. Which characters in *The Perfect Play* did you most identify with? Why?
10. If you had to speculate about Audrey's reunion with her father, how do you think it might all turn out in the end?

### About the Author

Louise Wener was born and raised in Ilford, East London. In the mid-1990s, after years of singing into hairbrushes and working dead-end jobs, she found fame as lead singer of the pop band Sleeper and went on to record three top-ten albums and eight top-forty singles. She is the author of the novel *Goodnight Steve McQueen* and lives in London.