



# the beginning of after

BY JENNIFER CASTLE

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Laurel's world changes instantly when her parents and brother are killed in a terrible car accident. Behind the wheel is the father of her bad-boy neighbor, David Kaufman, whose mother is also killed. Now Laurel must navigate a new world in which she and her best friend grow apart, boys may or may not be approaching her out of pity, overpowering memories lurk everywhere, and Mr. Kaufman is comatose but still very much alive. Through it all there is David, who swoops in and out of Laurel's life and to whom she finds herself attracted against her better judgment. She will forever be connected to him by their mutual loss, a connection that will change them both in unexpected ways.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Laurel and Meg grow apart? Have you ever experienced this with your friends? How did it make you feel?
2. Why is Laurel reluctant to meet with Suzie, the grief counselor? Do you think our society puts a stigma on seeing a therapist?
3. If you were faced with a tragic experience like Laurel's, how do you think you would react? How about if you were the friend of someone who went through something similar?
4. After the incident at the prom, Laurel is worried that Joe only likes her because he feels sorry for her. Do you think that is true?
5. How does working at the animal hospital affect Laurel? How does her relationship with the animals help her cope with her trauma?
6. What are Laurel's emotions about Mr. Kaufman's role in the accident? How do they affect her feelings toward David?
7. Laurel finds herself drawn to David because of what they've both gone through. Do you think they would have connected despite the accident? Why or why not?
8. Why does Nana avoid taking her trip home after moving in with Laurel?
9. Laurel chooses to rescue a cat from the pound instead of helping her best friend, Meg. Do you agree or disagree with Laurel's decision?
10. Why does Laurel tell Mr. Kaufman about the accident? Would you have done the same thing if you were in her position?
11. Do you think Laurel picked the right college? Which would you have chosen?
12. Laurel deals with her grief by trying to rejoin her normal life and by starting school again. David, on the other hand, escapes from the only life he knows. Whose reaction do you most identify with, and why?

Book Club Pick!

