

## The Surrogate

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### Introduction

**“*The Surrogate* is a thrilling, high-stakes debut centering on a vulnerable newborn and two women who will do almost anything to claim her as their daughter. With a collection of vividly rendered characters, this twisty tale will leave you thinking about the true meaning of motherhood long after you turn the last page. I loved it!”—Patry Francis, bestselling author of *All the Children Are Home***

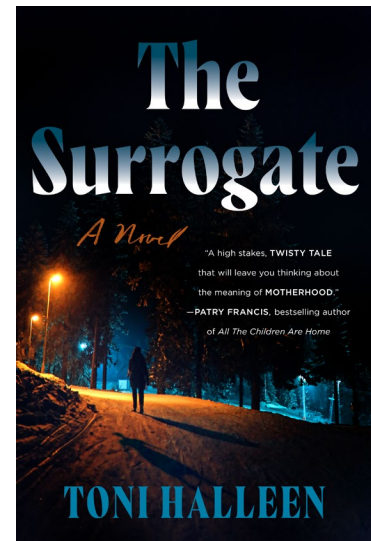
Ruth is a no-nonsense fortysomething journalist from the Midwest, desperate for a child with her new husband, Hal. Their hope rests with Cally, a nineteen-year-old who wants to go to college—but doesn’t have the cash. The arrangement seems perfect for everyone.

But within a day of the baby’s birth, Cally has a change of heart—and engineers a harrowing escape from the hospital with the newborn. When Ruth and Hal discover that Cally and their daughter are gone, a whole series of doubts and secrets is revealed, and the difference between right and wrong is no longer clear.

Set in the vast, sparsely populated upper reaches of northern Minnesota in the middle of winter, *The Surrogate* follows Ruth, Hal, Cally, through a maze of thought-provoking questions about the nature of family, love, and relationships: What would you do for your partner, when the going gets tough? How much is a pregnancy “worth”? And who, if anyone, “deserves” to be a mother?

### Questions for Discussion

1. What were some of the mistakes made by Hal and Ruth in setting up the surrogacy arrangement? What could they have done to better protect themselves, if anything?
2. Why did Cally make the decision she did at the beginning of the book? Was she right to trust Digger, and if not, what other options did she have?
3. Before her surrogacy, Cally had never been pregnant or had any children. Do you think this made a difference in how the events played out in this novel?
4. What could Hal have done differently in response to the various crises regarding the baby and Cally? Why did he make the choices he did?
5. Were Digger’s intentions correct, and if so, what should he have done differently?



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6. What role, if any, did Ruth's being a stepmom play in her desire for a child with Hal, and how did it affect the outcome of the story?
  7. In what ways did other women characters (such as Vera, Mrs. Z, Deena) act as mother figures? Has your view of mothering changed after reading this story?
  8. Why did Ruth make the decision she did at the end, and what were the factors that she might have considered?
  9. If Cally had not agreed with Ruth's proposition, what would the implications have been?
  10. Who were you rooting for? Why? Did it change? Why? What made you root for one character over another, and what made you change your mind?

### Surrogacy Discussion

1. Cally was a traditional surrogate (meaning her own egg was fertilized). Would her experience have been different if she had been a gestational surrogate (using a third-party, donated egg)? Why or why not?
2. In the U.S., surrogacy laws vary from state to state. Should there be a consistent federal law with minimum standards for surrogacy arrangements? If so, what kinds of standards?
3. Should the law prohibit commercial (paid) surrogacy and only allow "altruistic" surrogacy? Why or why not?
4. Should the law set a minimum payment for the surrogate, and if so, how should the amount be determined? How about other benefits or protections?
5. Should the child's needs or rights be considered and how? Who should have input into this consideration? Why?
6. If you were a surrogate, would you want to have contact with the child after they're born? Or with the family? What kind of contact and for how long?
7. If you were the intended parent, would you want the surrogate to have contact with the child? What if your child wanted to meet their surrogate?
8. What should happen if the surrogate changes their mind? What if the intended parent changes their mind or can no longer care for the child?
9. How is surrogacy similar to or different from various forms of adoption? How is it similar to or different from egg donation and sperm donation?
10. How should custody disputes with a surrogate be decided, and how is it different from a divorce custody dispute?