



Jessica Knoll has been a senior editor at Cosmopolitan, and the articles editor at SELF. She grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia and graduated from The Shipley School in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, and from Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and bulldog, Beatrice.

Knoll published a raw and chilling essay describing how the gang rape depicted in this novel was drawn from her own experience in high school, when she was sexually assaulted by three boys at a party, and then tormented by classmates who labeled her a slut.

Other Works

The Favourite Sister

Discussion Questions

1. Ani tells the reader “I’m no plucky heroine.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Did your opinion of Ani change as you learned more about her past? If so, why?
2. During the course of the book, the way that Ani is identified changes. At varying times, she is TifAni FaNelli, Tif, Finny, and Ani Harrison. What do these names indicate about her and how she relates to herself and others?
3. Why do you think Ani agrees to participate in the documentary about the Five? What was her role in the tragedy? How has it shaped her as an adult?
4. When describing Arthur for the documentary, Ani remembers how “he was the only one who stood up for me when a lot of people turned on me.” Why is it so important that she shares something positive about him? Discuss Ani’s friendship with Arthur. Why do you think he defended her? What was your first impression of Arthur? Did your feelings about him change? If so, why?
5. Ani says the word “fiancé” does not “bother me so much as the one that came after it. Husband. That word laced the corset tighter, crushing organs, sending panic into my throat with the bright beat of a distress signal.” Discuss why it is so important to Ani to be married before the documentary airs. Do you think, as Ani does, that her engagement ring is a symbol of status and legitimacy? What compromises, if any, must Ani make for the sake of her engagement? Do you think the compromises are worth it? Explain your answer.
6. What were your initial impressions of Dina FaNelli? After learning what happened to Ani at Dean’s party, Dina “told me I was not the daughter she raised.” What values did Dina impart? Do you think she was a good mother? Why or why not?
7. During Ani’s junior year of high school, she takes a trip to New York City with her classmates. How is this trip a watershed moment for her? Contrast the reality of her life in New York City with the vision of her future that she had then. Has she achieved the success she dreamed of? How does Ani measure success? Does this change by the novel’s conclusion? In what ways?
8. Although Ani initially distrusts the documentary director, Aaron, she begins to think of him as “kind, rather than leering.” What causes Ani to change her mind? Do you think

Aaron has her best interests at heart? Ani's burgeoning trust of Aaron ultimately leads her to wonder "if that had been the reality all along, and, if it was, what else I'd read wrong." Many of the characters in this book struggle to distinguish their perceptions from reality. Are there any who are particularly adept at it? If so, who are they? Discuss how they manage to do it.

9. Explain the significance of the title of the book. When Ani is called the "luckiest girl alive," the phrase is used derisively. Who describes her as such and why? By the conclusion of the book, did you think Ani was lucky? If so, in what way?

10. What do you think led to the tragedy at Bradley? Could it have been prevented, and, if so, how? What role, if any, does Ani play in the tragedy?

11. After Luke meets Ani's parents, he says "I can't believe I'm the one who got to save you." Discuss Luke's relationship with Ani. Do you think he did save her from her past? Why is he so reluctant to speak with Ani about it? Did you think Luke and Ani were well suited?

12. Discuss the structure of the book. What's the effect of alternating between Ani's current life and her freshman year at Bradley? Did learning about Ani's past help you better understand her current actions? Did your feelings about Ani change as you learned more about her? If so, how?

13. Ani tells Andrew Larson that she is wary of participating in the documentary because "I don't know what the bent is. I know what the editing process can do." Are Ani's reservations justified? Many of the characters edit their versions of events, often to fit self-serving narratives. When Ani is interviewed by Dr. Anita Perkins, Ani "had to guide everyone in my direction with swift surety, otherwise they would dig, dig, dig." What effect does Ani's distortion of the truth have on her life and the lives of those around her? Are there other characters who are lying by omission? Who are they and what are their motivations?

14. Why is Ani desperate to be friends with Hilary and Olivia. What sacrifices is she willing to make to keep their friendship? Contrast Ani's friendship with Hilary and Olivia with her friendship with Nell. Do you think that Nell is a good friend? In what ways?