

The Year of Magical Thinking – Part 2: Questions to be discussed on May 21

Chapter 11

1. What did Joan argue with the doctors about at UCLA Medical Center? Why was Joan so opposed to the doctors' plan?
2. Where was Quintana moved to? Why was Joan reluctant to tell the woman from Massachusetts?
3. What was the view from the UCLA hospital window? What memory did it trigger? Why was that a good memory?
4. What less pleasant memory does Joan have? Why was she regretting that she had called John to tell him about that incident?
5. What complications delayed the transfer to New York?
6. Why do you think Joan included the conversation between Quintana and John about which kind of McDonald's hamburger they ate?

Chapter 12

7. What's the difference between grieving and mourning?
8. As Joan mourned John, what did she wish she could ask him?
9. What did the doctor mean when he said, "It's not black and white"?
10. In 1987, John's doctor found serious problems with his heart. How did Joan and John see this diagnosis differently?

Chapter 13

11. In what ways did Joan think her dreams related to John's death?
12. What were some of the worthless items that Joan treasured because they reminded her of John?

Chapter 14

13. Joan becomes overly cautious after losing her husband. What are a couple examples?
14. When Joan told her doctor that she "couldn't see the upside in this", what did she mean? How is that different from seeing the light at the end of the tunnel?
15. What did John mean when he said, "It all evens out in the end"? What did Joan understand it to mean?

Chapter 15

16. Why did Joan think it would be safe to go to Boston? What caused her to cry?
17. What was a good omen before their trip to Paris?
18. How did the Stephen Hawking article relate to her current life?

Chapter 16

19. What did memories of Joe and Gertrude Black prompt Joan to do? How was the file she found significant?

Chapter 17

20. What was the difference between the landslide that destroyed the house where they lived as newlyweds and John's heart attack?
21. What causes Joan to feel self-pity in this section?

Chapter 18

22. Joan experienced some "cognitive deficits" that could have been related to the stress/grief she was feeling? What were the deficits?
23. After getting the paperwork, Joan learned when her husband had died. When had he actually died?
24. What were some of Joan's fantasies?

Chapter 19

25. At the end of this chapter, Joan asks, "Why did I think that this improvisation could never end? What is the "improvisation"?"

Chapter 20

26. What are some examples of Joan's loss of social skills?
27. What books were next to John's chair? Who made the bookmark?

Chapter 21

28. Who is the "broken man"? What did Joan mean when she said, "Quintana hung on to the fence. Her father did not."?

Chapter 22

29. As the anniversary of John's death approached, Joan is determined to maintain her Christmas traditions. What were they?
30. Why doesn't Joan want to finish that year?