



## ***The Unnamed by Joshua Ferris***

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### **About the author:**

Joshua Ferris's first novel, *Then We Came to the End*, won the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award, the Barnes and Noble Discover Award, and was a National Book Award finalist. His fiction has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Granta*, *The Guardian*, and *Tin House*, among other publications. He lives in New York.

Source: Author's website (<http://www.joshuaferris.com/>)

### **About this book:**

From award-winning novelist Joshua Ferris comes a mesmerizing love story every bit as daring and original as his critically acclaimed debut *Then We Came to the End*.

He was going to lose the house and everything in it. The rare pleasure of a bath, the copper pots hanging above the kitchen island, his family—again he would lose his family. He stood inside the house and took stock. Everything in it had been taken for granted. How had that happened again? He had promised himself not to take anything for granted and now he couldn't recall the moment that promise had given way to the everyday.

Tim Farnsworth is a handsome, healthy man, aging with the grace of a matinee idol. His wife, Jane, still loves him, and for all its quiet trials, their marriage is still stronger than most. Despite long hours at the office, he remains passionate about his work, and his partnership at a prestigious Manhattan law firm means that the

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work he does is important. And even as his daughter, Becka, retreats behind her guitar, her dreadlocks, and her puppy fat, he offers her every one of a father's honest lies about her being the most beautiful girl in the world.

He loves his wife, his family, his work, his home. He loves his kitchen. And then one day he stands up and walks out. And keeps walking.

*The Unnamed* is a dazzling novel about a marriage and a family and the unseen forces of nature and desire that seem to threaten them both. It is the heartbreaking story of a life taken for granted and what happens when that life is abruptly and irrevocably taken away.

Source: Author's website (<http://www.joshuaferri.com>)

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss the novel's opening paragraph. Why is it important that this story begins in the winter? What mood do the opening sentences create?
2. How would you describe the state of Tim and Jane's marriage, based solely on what you learn of them in the novel's first two chapters?
3. Discuss the importance of setting in the novel. How has living in an upscale suburb of New York shaped the Farnsworth family?
4. Describe the differences between Becka's relationship with her mother and with her father. How does the progression of Tim's illness change Becka?
5. How does Tim's work as an attorney shape his sense of himself as a husband, a father, and an individual? What does he enjoy about his work, and why is he



good at it?

6. Do you understand Tim's affliction primarily as a metaphor or as a physical affliction? Why is it important for the doctors who attempt to treat him to know whether the disease is mental or physical?
7. Discuss the role of Frank Novovian in the novel.
8. Why do Tim and Jane move back into the city after Tim stops working as an attorney?
9. How does the final section of the novel differ from all previous sections? How would you characterize Tim's interactions with the natural world? Does the novel's ending provide a reconciliation of some kind, or simply a termination? How do Tim and Jane each deal with the process of grief, and grieving?
10. Why do you think the author uses fragments of the Emily Dickinson poem "After great pain a formal feeling comes" to open the different sections of the novel?

Source: Author's website (<http://www.joshuaferri.com>)

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