



# CHRISTMAS EVE AT FRIDAY HARBOR

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. Mark and Sam accept the responsibility of raising their niece Holly, even though they have no previous experience with children. What are some of the positive and/or negative ways that instant parenthood would affect someone's life?
2. Mark tells Maggie, "Being alone isn't safety. It's just being alone." Maggie believes that she is protecting herself by staying alone, but is she?
3. Mark considers that his parents' marriage "had featured all the worst components of marriage, but none of its graces." How has his parents' relationship shaped the 3 Nolan children? Has the memories of your parents' relationship affected the way you relate to people now? If so, in what way(s)?
4. At the beginning of the story, Mark thinks that a "strict diet of reality" is best for a child. Do you agree? Should a child be allowed to believe in things like the tooth fairy or Santa Claus?
5. Maggie tells Mark that two uncles and a little girl can be defined as a family. Do you agree? How do you define a family?
6. Mark tells Holly that "love is a choice." However, in Holly's opinion, "love is something that happens to you." Whose view do you agree with, and why?
7. Elizabeth advises Maggie, "You have a new life. Keep the old friends, but it doesn't hurt to add some new ones." Why might you need to add new friends for a new phase of your life? What could they bring to the relationship that would be different from what old friends can offer?
8. While thinking about the death of her husband, Maggie reflects that "the loss would always stay with you, like a reminder note pinned to the inside of your jacket." How long do you think a widow or widower should wait before trying to find love again? How would someone know that she or he is ready for new emotional risk? What are some of the possible complications of dating a widow or widower?
9. Mark says, "I don't know that being right for each other is always the best foundation for a relationship." What do you think he means?
10. Mark tells Maggie, "I've never thought of a failed relationship as a waste of time. You always learn something." What is the most important thing you've learned from a failed relationship?
11. Some of Maggie's family holiday traditions, such as having her special mac and cheese dish, are mentioned in the story. What are some of your favorite holiday traditions, and what do they mean to you?