

# ***Running Away/Running Away – Maggie’s Story***

## **Suggestions for Counseling or Youth Groups**

I wrote *Running Away* to help open communication between mothers and daughters by helping them understand how perspective alters perception. (See [Behind the Story](#).)

The novel provides a removed, relatively safe opportunity to open discussion where there has been a lack of communication. The suspense line maintains interest for teens and adults. The writing is direct, which keeps the reading level at a newspaper level, accessible to most clients.

### **Choose which edition to read.**

Particularly if you are working with teens, read both editions and choose which one is more appropriate for the family, individual, or group with whom you are working.

***Running Away*\*\*** is the School Edition with asterisks used wherever there’s language inappropriate for school. The digital edition is available at Amazon and if you want paperbacks, contact me through the website and that can be arranged.

### **There are also significant differences in story content.**

In both editions, Maggie reads the journal Peg wrote when she was her age and ran away. In both, Peg is naïve and thinks of herself as a slut because she has apparently had sex with a number of guys at a frat party. In both, Maggie immediately realizes Peg was drugged and raped.

In the ***School Edition***, Peg meets Nick at the bus station, he offers her a place to stay when they get to Harrisburg, and leads her upstairs (past other people) to have sex when they get there. In that version, Peg figures she may as well, since she doesn’t have virginity to protect anymore, and he is letting her stay there. Maggie is glad she met someone (C.J.) who didn’t take advantage of her confused feelings about herself.

When I started writing Peg’s story, I thought it would roughly follow my meandering through my twenties. However, when she got to the bus station, the character took over and displayed extremely sexualized behavior that made me put the story aside – until I watched interviews with women putting their lives together after being trafficked and realized *that* was Peg’s story.

In ***Running Away – Maggie’s Story*** Maggie reads her mother’s entry about her sexualized behavior at the bus station and closes the journal. “It’s way too personal, not stuff anyone should know about their mother. She only did that ‘cuz of what happened at the frat house! I could have been like that with C.J. But he knew how messed up I’m feeling and wouldn’t let me make it worse.” After that, Maggie continues reading but summarizes most of it as Nick grooms Peg, then prostitutes her. There are three brief entries included – one of which Maggie spots as being meant for Nick to read, and the last one saying Peg was on her way West.

## **Discussion Questions**

Consider discussion questions in the books that are designed for book clubs.

Tailor open-ended questions specific to your clients.

Consider assigning people to discuss questions from Maggie’s or Peg’s point of view.

## Suggestions for More In-Depth Discussions

### **Maggie and her mother tell the story in alternating chapters.**

- Why does Maggie feel she has to run away?
- Would you feel the same in her situation?
- Why doesn't Maggie tell her mother what Richard's done?
- Why doesn't Peg know without being told?

### **Discuss the ways Richard manipulated all of them.**

- What kind of relationship did Peg and her daughters have before they got her to start dating?
- Was that already changing before Peg's first date with Richard?
- How did it change while they were dating? Was he already dividing Peg from her girls? *We don't see it in the book, but when they were first dating, he was probably telling Peg repeatedly that the teens were old enough to be on their own as much as they were, so they were drifting apart even before the wedding.*
- Richard probably knew he would lose his job. Financially, they'd have been better off if he'd sold his house and moved to the small town to live with Peg and the girls. How is it advantageous for him to have them move into his house, instead? *Some points to consider: who's paying the bills? What made Peg's computer crash? The only neighbors mentioned are the young couple. Is this a suburb with frequent changes in home ownership or commuters who don't know each other?*
- How did Richard manipulate things to alienate Maggie, her sister, and her mother from each other? *Maggie and Lizzie have to share a room. He's "supportive" of Peg by assuring her Maggie's bad behavior is not her fault because Lizzie is a good girl.*

### **Maggie gets a place to stay her first night in Harrisburg.**

- Would it really be this easy for her to find a place to stay?
- What details in the house description make it "real" for you?
- Would you stay there if you were in Maggie's position?
- What details should be warning Maggie to get out of there?

### **Maggie reads her mother's journal after she leaves home.**

- How does the journal make Maggie feel farther from her mother?
- How does it make her feel closer to her mother?
- What differences do you see between Peg as a teen and Maggie? What similarities?
- If Maggie had known her mother's story all along, how would that have changed things before and after Richard showed up? Will it help her heal now?
- Should parents keep secrets about themselves from their kids?

### **Maggie's mother makes drastic changes in her life to go find Maggie.**

- Is this realistic in Peg's situation? For most parents?
- What did Peg do right financially that makes it possible for her to go find Maggie?

My [newsletter](http://sherimcguinn.substack.com) caters to readers and writers: [sherimcguinn.substack.com](http://sherimcguinn.substack.com)

Review links for *Running Away: Maggie's Story*:

[www.goodreads.com/book/show/95210207](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/95210207)

[www.amazon.com/dp/1942069049](http://www.amazon.com/dp/1942069049)

Every review helps – thank you.

*Thanks for reading!*