

READING GROUP GUIDE

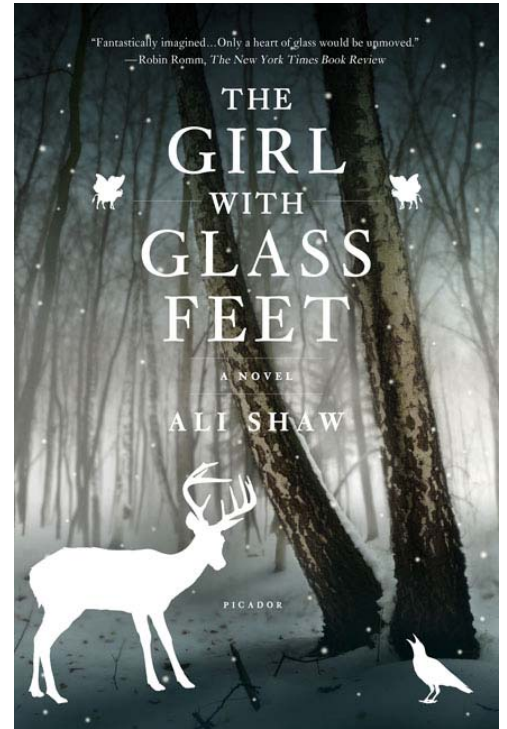
The Girl with Glass Feet

A Novel

by **Ali Shaw**

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *The Girl with Glass Feet* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *The Girl with Glass Feet*.

About the Book

Strange things are happening on the remote and snowbound archipelago of St. Hauda's Land. Magical winged creatures flit around the icy bogland, albino animals hide themselves in the snow-glazed woods, and Ida Maclaird is slowly turning into glass. Ida is an outsider in these parts who has only visited the islands once before. Yet during that one fateful visit the glass transformation began to take hold, and now she has returned in search of a cure.

The Girl with Glass Feet is a love story to treasure, “crafted with elegance and swept by passionate magic and the yearning for connection. A rare pleasure” (Katherine Dunn, author of *Geek Love*).

About the Author

Ali Shaw graduated from Lancaster University with a degree in English literature and has since worked as a bookseller and at Oxford’s Bodleian Library. *The Girl with Glass Feet* is his first novel. Please visit his Web site at www.alishaw.co.uk.

Discussion Questions

1. *Light* is a motif that permeates the novel. What is the significance of light in the story? What does light mean to Midas? Why is it meaningful that the jellyfish of St. Hauda’s Land emit light when they die?
2. Why is Midas drawn to photography? How does his obsession color the way he looks at the world and affect his decisions? Why does Midas think that negatives are the “real photographs”?
3. Why does Ida choose men with whom she must be endlessly patient and cannot have satisfying relationships? Why does she give Midas so many chances?
4. What role does color—or lack thereof—play in the novel?
5. Why does Ida make Midas promise not to tell anyone about her feet? Why is she so intent on keeping her condition a secret?
6. Why does Henry Fuwa say that Ida’s glass transformation is not a disease, but simply a part of her (109)? Is there another way for us to understand the condition besides thinking of it as a terminal illness?
7. What similarities and differences exist between Henry Fuwa and Carl Maulson?
8. The major female characters—Ida, Evaline, Freya, Catherine—meet untimely and tragic deaths and in some cases make sacrifices of themselves. What does the consistent theme of female sacrifice imply about women’s roles in relationships?
9. Hector Stallows expresses to Midas his amazement of how “a simple alignment of eyes can cause so much devastation” (202), in reference to the mysterious creature that turns everything white with its eyes. What is the importance of looking and seeing throughout the novel? Is the sense of sight ultimately more detrimental than good in the characters’ lives?
10. Inevitability and fate are presented as the reason for many tragic events in the novel, such as Ida’s dog’s demise. Ida herself seems convinced very early on in the course of her illness that there would be no cure. Did you believe a cure would present itself? How long did you allow yourself to hope?

11. Many characters are burdened and blinded by their guilt and regret, unable to move forward from painful events of the past. Which characters do you feel the most sympathy for? Which characters do you feel could have made different decisions to avoid their circumstances?
12. Would Midas have been able to forgive and change his opinion of his father if he had allowed himself to read his father's book? Is his father's condition a complete excuse for his long-term behavior to his wife and son?
13. Does Midas intend to recover Ida's body after he becomes accomplished as a diver? Should he?

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