



ALLISON PATAKI

IT GIRL

BOOK CLUB KIT

# AUTHOR'S NOTE

*Dear reader,*

How did I first find Evelyn? I first saw images of the Gibson Girl hanging up in my mother's bedroom when I was a girl. I was endlessly fascinated by the scenes of elegant, busy women. I found it to be so intriguing—this combination of cool and slightly intimidating sophistication blended with the mundane activities of daily life. Nobody I knew dressed like that to, say, wash their hands. Plus, those piles of hair!

Fast forward a few years, my mother made an offhand comment, “Oh, the real Gibson Girl, her life was so tragic.” Wait, there was a real woman behind these images? A true-life Gibson Girl? And her life was full of drama? How had I never stopped to consider that? I knew I had met my next book.

As I considered Evelyn's story as a subject for a novel, I began to imagine a divergent version—an arc for my leading lady that was inspired by Evelyn's life and yet one that explored this lifelong desire of hers to escape. For years, as the story swirled and the characters took shape in my mind, I wrestled with the question: what if I give Evelyn the opportunity to reclaim her own agency, even to re-write her own ending?

My earnest hope is to inspire and move you, the readers of today, while offering a story in which the spirit of the times, this story, and its incomparable leading lady all shine through.

Thank you for reading!

*Allison Pataki*

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. By telling her own story in retrospect, Evelyn claims narrative control. What do you think she most wants readers to understand about her life—and about women like her?
2. How does the book peel back the glamour of elite New York society to reveal its moral contradictions, particularly in how it treats working-class women?
3. Evelyn repeatedly adopts roles—onstage, in art studios, in her relationships, and in society. At what moments does she feel most herself, and when does she feel most trapped by the roles others assign her?
4. The novel suggests that fascination can quickly turn into manipulation or even the desire for possession. What does the book argue is the true cost of fame and adoration? Do we believe that pop culture builds up its icons simply to tear them down? Discuss that common recurring phenomenon.
5. Compare the men who “collect” Evelyn—through paintings, jewels, marriage, or reputation. How does the novel distinguish between being seen and being known?
6. Evelyn’s mother is a complicated character. How would you characterize their relationship? Where do care and exploitation blur?
7. Characters like Leah, Violet, Penny, and Dinah play crucial roles in Evelyn’s survival. How do Evelyn’s female friendships differ from her romantic relationships?
8. Where did you find yourself drawing parallels between Evelyn’s world and modern celebrity culture and influencers?
9. How did the city of New York and this particular era play a role in Evelyn’s story? What did you learn about New York City at the dawn of the 20th century from this book?
10. What do you think Evelyn and Penny do once they arrive in France? Imagine and discuss a possible “next act” for these characters.
11. Which were Evelyn’s greatest strengths? Does your answer evolve as Evelyn grows over the course of this novel?
12. If you could ask author Allison Pataki one thing about writing *It Girl*, what would it be?

# DRAWING BACK THE CURTAIN:

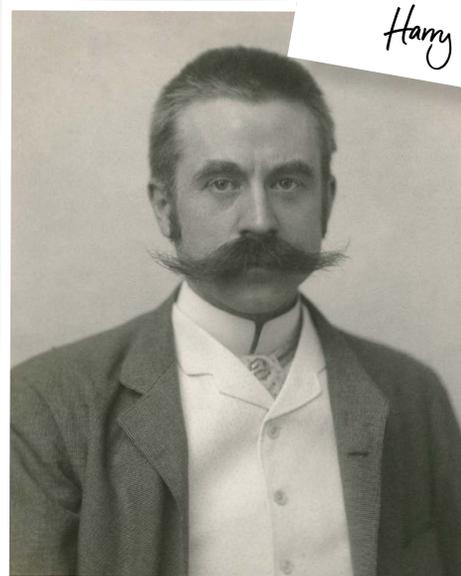
The real people behind *It Girl*



*Evelyn Nesbit*



*Harry Kendall Thaw*



*Stanford White*

# SELF GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF NEW YORK'S GILDED AGE

- The Metropolitan Club
- The Knickerbocker Club
- Central Park
- The Beekman Mansion
- Emily Thorn Vanderbilt  
Sloane White Mansion
- The Metropolitan  
Museum of Art
- The Frick Collection
- Herbert N Strauss House
- James B Duke House
- The Plaza Hotel
- Broadway

