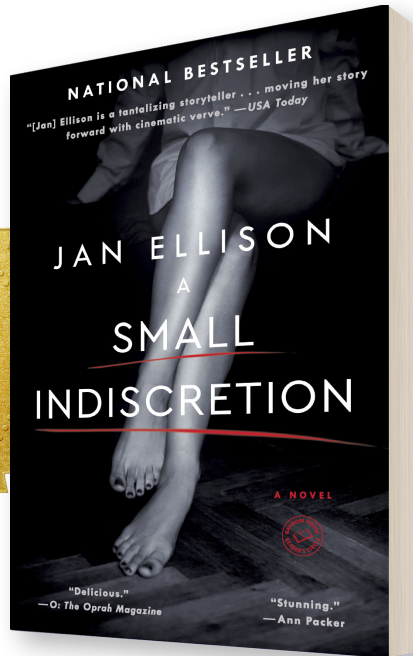


JAN ELLISON

A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

## INFORMATION KIT



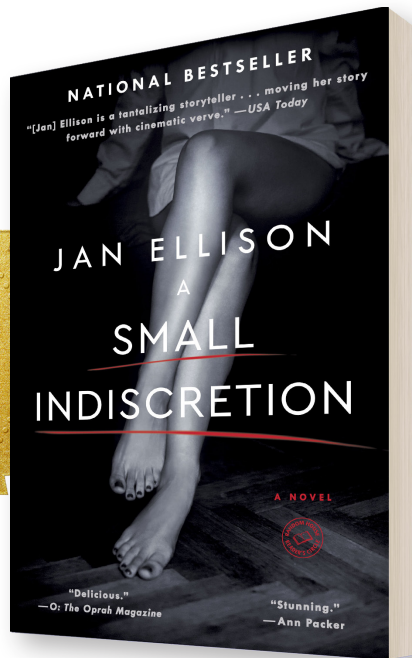
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JAN ELLISON

A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

## PUB INFO & CONTACTS



 **USA TODAY**  
BESTSELLER

*Trade paper edition*  
352 pages, \$16  
ISBN 978-0-8129-8542-9

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JAN ELLISON

A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

ABOUT THE BOOK

**"Rich with suspense...What at first seems a straightforward account of a young innocent abroad quickly morphs (flavorfully, artfully) into a sort of sexual whodunit...Lovely writing guides us through."**

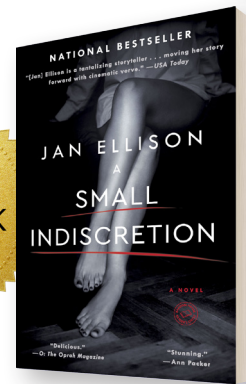
—*San Francisco Chronicle* (Book Club Pick)

With psychological suspense, emotional depth and hypnotic prose, O. Henry Prize winner Jan Ellison has delivered a brilliantly paced, beautifully written debut novel about one woman's reckoning with a youthful mistake.

At nineteen, Annie Black trades a bleak future in a washed out California town for a London winter of drinking and abandon. Twenty years later, she is a San Francisco lighting designer and happily married mother of three who has put her reckless youth behind her. Then a photo from that distant winter in Europe arrives inexplicably in her mailbox, and an old obsession is awakened. Past and present collide, Annie's marriage falters, and her son takes a car ride that ends with his life hanging in the balance. Now Annie must confront her own transgressions and fight for her family by untangling the mysteries of the turbulent winter that drew an invisible map of her future. Gripping, insightful and lyrical, *A Small Indiscretion* announces the arrival of major new voice in literary suspense as it unfolds a story of denial, passion, forgiveness—and the redemptive power of love.

- A **USA TODAY** Bestseller
- A *San Francisco Chronicle* Best Book of the Year
- *Tournament of Books* Long List for Finest Fiction of 2015
- *O. The Oprah Magazine* Editor's Pick
- A *USA Today* Weekend Pick
- A 2015 *San Francisco Chronicle* Book Club Pick

- A *FlavorWire* Staff Pick
- One of *Cosmopolitan's* 50 Things to do in January 2015
- *Huffington Post's* 10 Must-Reads for Spring
- *The Reading Room's* 12 Debut Authors Worth Reading
- *Stylecaster's* Smart Girls Guide to Summer Reading



**USA TODAY  
BESTSELLER**

**"Delicious."**

—*O: The Oprah Magazine*

**"Tantalizing."**

—*USA Today*

**"Stunning."**

—Ann Packer

**"A thought-provoking read."**

—*The Huffington Post*

**"Engrossing."**

—Emma Donoghue

**"Skillfully plotted."**

—*The Rumpus*



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JAN ELLISON

A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

## PASSAGES FROM THE BOOK

“The scarf I was wearing had been hand-colored a blunt red. It was tied around my neck like a choker, like a noose. But it wasn’t me who was about to hang.”

“People say a mother is only as happy as her least happy child. But what if the state of that child’s happiness has become a mystery? What if that child is no longer a child but a young man who has removed himself to a great distance and encased himself in a great silence?”

“Denial, as any addict in recovery will tell you, is not defined as knowing something and pretending you don’t; it is failing to see it at all.”

“I suppose unrequited love is the hardest kind to shed because it is not really love at all. It is a half-love, and we are forever stomping around trying to get hold of the other half.”

“Perhaps blame is the way the universe organizes itself around tragedy and loss. Without blame, suffering is random, and that kind of randomness leads to madness.”

“It was so undignified and unnecessary, the way married people behaved. The indiscriminate airing of grievances, the incessant flinging of blame and complaint. Of course, I had no idea back then what a marriage required. How the resentments and oversights and misunderstandings could pile up, sometimes moving ordinary kindness beyond reach. Love piled up, too, if you were lucky, but it seemed to be locked away in a separate compartment, sometimes unreachable when it was needed most.”

“If, when I looked, I was not perfect, how could I be beautiful? And if I was not beautiful, how could I be loved?”

“I told him because I wanted what everybody wants—to be known. To know oneself, and to tell the whole story of that self, and to be loved anyway.”

“All of it was rushing together, making a psychedelic mess of my heart.”

“After all, experiencing something is not the same as remembering it. A memory is by its nature a revision.”

“They say the human body can lose 50 percent of its body parts and survive. But it depends on which parts, and which body.”

“The heart is large, and there is more than one material in the bucket we call love.”

“Watching you together—your hair and eyes, your flesh and bone, your three bodies so frank and solid in the world—gave me immeasurable pleasure. It was pleasure derived not from parental pride, but from gratitude. We had been blessed by the existence on this earth of our three particular children, and we had been assigned a blessed task in keeping you all safe in the world.”





JAN ELLISON

# A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

## AUTHOR Q&A

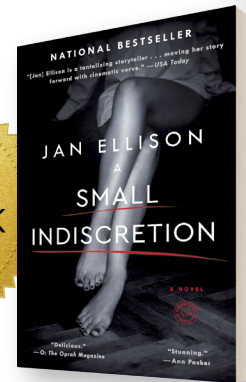
### What was the genesis of the story of young Annie?

When I was nineteen, I took a year off college. I spent three months in Paris, then moved to London and checked into a youth hostel. On my birthday, I called my mother from an iconic red phone booth. This was before cell phones and the Internet, and when we'd hung up, I realized there was no way she nor anyone else could reach me. I found that idea exhilarating. Two decades later, when I sat down to write what became *A Small Indiscretion*, it was simply that feeling I was trying to capture—the heady, lonely liberty of that moment in life when you can choose to become anyone at all.

### One of the main themes is the tension between the freedom of youth and the constraints of family life. Why did you decide to focus on these two periods in Annie's life?

It's not easy for Annie to give up that sense of liberation and possibility she feels when she first arrives in London. Yet later, it seems unthinkable for her to turn away from keeping her children safe in the world, or to compromise the marriage that is the bedrock of those children's lives. This paradox confounds Annie—and fascinates me.

Freedom is intoxicating. Marriage and parenting can feel suffocating. The burdens of family life are also precious, though; they are blessings we both celebrate and resist. We make our peace, then fight it. We make mistakes, and we make amends. And if we're lucky, we carry on to treasure the laden, harried, unremarkable days, the blessed, barely observed constructions that are our adult lives.



USA TODAY  
BESTSELLER

### The novel takes the form of a confessional letter from Annie to Robbie. Why did you choose this structure?

I was not conscious of making a choice to write the book in this form; I simply found that one day, after years of work, the narrative shifted, and Annie was writing to her son. That was the day Robbie entered the novel, offering Annie's history shape and purpose. This structure arrived organically, and I never considered altering it.

It was only later that I understood Annie's intent. "Sometimes I try not to think of you. Or at least I try not to worry. But I am superstitious; it might be when I fail to worry that you will slip away for good." Annie addresses Robbie because it allows her to imagine him healthy and whole. Writing "to him" is her antidote for despair. As a parent, vigilance can be your only recourse. To look away, to let silence rise between yourself and the child in your care, is to risk letting that child go. But ultimately, Annie's "barely legible revision" is not for Robbie at all; it is her "own tangled attempt to finally see the past and let it rest."

MORE



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JAN ELLISON

A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

## AUTHOR Q&A (cont.)

### **As a mother with four children, how did you find the time to write *A Small Indiscretion*?**

I dabbled in writing before I became a mother, but it was only after the second of our four children was born that I quit my job and signed up for my first writing class. The two preoccupations have always gone hand in hand, and in the beginning, I couldn't work it out: Was I meant to feel guilty when I was writing, or when I was not writing? When I was abandoning my children and shirking off my domestic duties or when I was tossing aside what might turn out to be my only talent?

In the bulk of the hours and days of those early years, I was immersed in the physical act of mothering. The writing was a guilty retreat, the thing I'd slink off to furtively, greedily, as if to a lover. Two or three times a week for a few hours in a café. Or on a Saturday morning, while my husband watched four kids under the age of 8. When the novel was nearing completion, my mother swooped in again and again to take over my household while I fled to the mountains to finish it.

Leaving my children to write has seemed a kind of madness over the years, but it would have been a different kind of madness not to write—one that might, in fact, have driven me insane.

### **If you could go back in time to your 20 year old self, what advice would you give her?**

There isn't much I could say to my twenty-year-old self she wasn't already telling herself—then systematically ignoring. "All in good time," for instance. "Everything in moderation." These were the mantras I whispered then ignored as I rushed forward, grabbing everything at once and wildly seeking oblivion. Once, I was sitting on a beach in New Zealand, at night, eating a hamburger, when a ski boat motored up and idled just a few feet off shore. There were men in the boat. One of them called out to me, asking if I wanted to go for a ride. "Sure," I said. "Why not?" I was twenty-two by then. I ought to have known better. But I took off my shoes, rolled up my jeans, and waded out. Many hours later, I was in the back of a cab alone—drenched, freezing, miserable—trying to get back to where I'd started.

But is there really so much room for regret? You can't be a person you're not, and you can't know the meaning of a story until you've gotten to the end of it. And my 20-year-old self taught me a few things I haven't forgotten: How to look at the world around me and take notes; how to leap joyfully into the unknown; how to retrace my steps when I've taken a wrong turn and find my way back—wet, cold, and wiser.



# JAN ELLISON

## A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

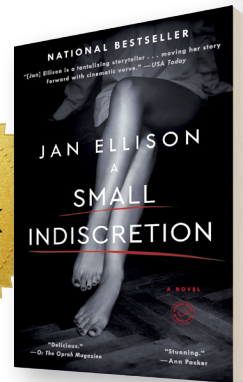
### AUTHOR BIOS

#### A LONGER BIO

Jan Ellison is the *USA Today* bestselling author of the debut novel, *A Small Indiscretion*, which was a *San Francisco Chronicle* Best Book of the Year. A graduate of Stanford, Jan left college for a year at nineteen to study French in Paris, work in an office in London, and try her hand at writing. Twenty years later, her notebooks from that year became the germ of *A Small Indiscretion*.

Jan spent two years in Hawaii, Australia and Southeast Asia after college. She worked as a waitress and a typist, trekked solo in the Himalayas, took trains across India, and job-hunted, unsuccessfully, in Hong Kong. Then she returned to Silicon Valley and ran marketing for a financial software startup for five years. After the company went public, Jan left to raise her kids and write.

Jan holds an MFA from San Francisco State University. Her essays about parenting, travel and writing have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Writer's Digest* and elsewhere. Her short fiction has received numerous awards, including the O. Henry Prize for her first published story. Jan grew up in L.A. and lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband of twenty years and their four children.



**USA TODAY  
BESTSELLER**

#### A SHORTER BIO

Jan Ellison is the *USA Today* bestselling author of the debut novel, *A Small Indiscretion*, which was a *San Francisco Chronicle* Best Book of the Year. Jan won an O. Henry Prize for her first short story, and her essays about writing and parenting have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and elsewhere. A graduate of Stanford, Jan lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband and their four children.





JAN ELLISON

A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

**MEDIA REVIEWS**

"Ellison is a tantalizing storyteller, dropping delicious hints of foreshadowing and shifting back and forth in time...moving her story forward with cinematic verve... Compellingly sympathetic characters bring the London chapter of Annie's story to dramatic life... Ellison masterfully captures the confusing and powerful moment when a young woman realizes her effect on men."

—*USA Today*

"Delicious lazy-day reading. Just don't underestimate the writing. Ellison describes [Annie Black's] various love triangles in lavish prose... The real strengths of this novel are the foggy intimate flashbacks that so perfectly capture the sexual and romantic confusion of a young woman in a foreign land."

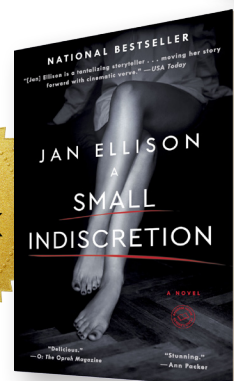
—*O: The Oprah Magazine (Editor's Pick)*

"Rich with suspense...Delectable elements of this terrific first novel abound...What at first seems a straightforward account of a young innocent abroad quickly morphs (flavorfully, artfully) into a sort of sexual whodunit. [Jan] Ellison gives us an aching physical sense of family life...Lovely writing guides us through, driven by a quiet generosity... This voice knows something, and by the end of the novel, so do we."

—*San Francisco Chronicle (Book Club Pick)*

"An emotional detective story with every human layer laid bare...To read *A Small Indiscretion* is to eat fudge before dinner: slightly decadent behavior, highly caloric, and extremely satisfying...mirrors real life in ways that surprise and inspire."

—*New York Journal of Books*



**USA TODAY  
BESTSELLER**

"A thought-provoking read...How do the choices we make when we're young affect our lives and relationships later on? That's the question Ellison explores so powerfully in this debut novel about a marriage built on the sin of omission."

—*Huffington Post*

"Insightful, suspenseful, and hard to put down...Like the photograph that arrives in the mail and sets the plot of this gorgeous novel in motion, *A Small Indiscretion* reminds us of the intensity of youthful desire and the fragile nature of a marriage built on secrecy. A stunning debut."

—*Ann Packer, New York Times bestselling author of The Dive from Clausen's Pier*

"*A Small Indiscretion* is a novel to tear through on a plane ride or on the beach. For a few hours, I was drawn into a web of secrets, a world of unrequited love and youthful mistakes that feel heightened and more romantic on the cold winter streets of London, Paris, and Ireland."

—*Bustle*

MORE



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JAN ELLISON

A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

## MEDIA REVIEWS (cont.)

“An impressive fiction debut...both a psychological mystery and a study of the divide between desire and duty.”

—*San Jose Mercury News*

“*A Small Indiscretion* traces a long ago affair back to a woman’s comfortable family life. The plot explodes delightfully, with suspense and a few twists. Using second-person narration and hypnotic prose, Ellison’s debut novel is both juicy and beautifully-written. How do I know it’s juicy? A stranger started reading it over my shoulder on the subway, and told me he was sorry that I was turning the pages too quickly.”

—*Flavorwire (Staff Pick)*

“Absorbing, chilling, and moving...It might be convenient if our mistakes would fade with time, but that wouldn’t make for the kind of taut, hypnotic story Jan Ellison tells...In a brilliantly paced unravelling, Ellison makes vivid the sometimes tragic interplay of choice and fate, lust and love, youth and adulthood – which can bring its own mistakes.”

—*Robin Black, author of Life Drawing*

“What girl hasn’t wanted the bad boy, the one she knows is not good for her but can’t quite forget?... Ellison writes gracefully, with moments of startling insight. Her first novel is an emotional thriller, skillfully plotted in taut, visual scenes. As Ellison pulls the thread that unravels the past, she weaves a rich tapestry of memory and desire, secrets and omissions, and exposes the knotted wages of love.”

—*The Rumpus*

“An engrossing, believable, gracefully written family drama that reveals our past’s bare-knuckle grip on our present.”

—*Emma Donoghue, New York Times bestselling author of Room*

“Hard to put down...O. Henry Prize winner Jan Ellison’s debut novel is a puzzle with the outside pieces finished. Reading it is like compulsively fitting all those revealing middle pieces together...Skillfully weaving two plots, Ellison unveils the details of each, piece by tantalizing piece.”

—*BookPage*

“*A Small Indiscretion* is that rare thing—a literary page turner written with great warmth and humanity, which pulls the reader in emotionally without a hint of sentimentality.”

—*Alice LaPlante, New York Times bestselling author of Turn of Mind*

“If you liked *Gone Girl* for its suspenseful look inside a marriage...try *A Small Indiscretion*. It touches many of the same nerves.”

—*Stylecaster*

“Connoisseurs of domestic suspense will finish this book in a few breathless sittings, then wait eagerly for Ellison’s next trick...Ellison’s debut novel is an emotional thriller of the Anita Shreve variety, with revelations that continue and relationships that evolve until the final pages.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

MORE



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JAN ELLISON

A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

## MEDIA REVIEWS (cont.)

“*A Small Indiscretion* is so carefully plotted, so complex and unusual, it’s almost hard to believe this is author Jan Ellison’s first novel.”

—*Everyday eBook*

“Jan Ellison has created a patchwork quilt like story about a family in turmoil...an exploration of love in its many forms...an engrossing novel.”

—*Kansas City Literature Examiner*

“How Ellison interweaves the mystery involving Annie’s younger life in London, events in the recent past and those of the present is astounding. It is so compelling you will want to read more after the book ends. Jan Ellison is here to stay.”

—*The Free Lance-Star*

“A deftly crafted, absorbing novel that peels back the layers of Annie’s character as it reveals the secrets of her past and present...Ellison parcels out details carefully, and even though readers might anticipate one revelation, there is at least one other that will take them by surprise... A cleverly constructed debut.”

—*Booklist*



JAN ELLISON

A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

A POPULAR BOOK CLUB PICK

*A San Francisco Chronicle Official 2015 Book Club Selection*

*"A great book club selection...*both suspenseful and literary. Topics like love, obsession, betrayal, forgiveness, marriage, and second chances make it interesting to dissect."

—*Booking Mama*

"The plot was wonderfully woven with lots of suspense; several members reported they couldn't put the book down, even though it's not a mystery per se. The theme of forgiving oneself resonated with this seasoned group of baby boomers. Our discussion went far deeper than usual, centering on marriage and what makes or breaks it, about characters' choices and the consequences. *One of the best book club meetings we've ever had!*"

—*Book Group in Albuquerque, NM*

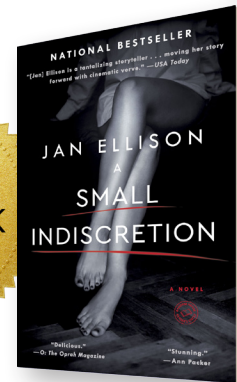
"This is such a beautifully written book! I adored this story; that favorite read by far this year. *This made such a wonderful book club discussion book.*"

—*Emily R. Foltz, 5.0 out of 5 stars*

*"I found [A Small Indiscretion] to be a fantastic book for our book group.* If you read it for yours, think of the following questions to ponder "What constitutes a small indiscretion vs. a larger one?" "When should one be truthful vs. not?" "What would you do if you met with your first love later in life?" Well, those are just a few but you could discuss this book for hours. There are some very interesting plot twists which surprised me and hopefully will surprise you too. The writing skill of the author is superb and lovely to experience. I highly recommend this book."

—*Cindy Roberts, 5.0 out of 5 stars*

A  
San Francisco  
Chronicle  
BEST BOOK  
OF THE  
YEAR



USA TODAY  
BESTSELLER

"A wonderful read! This book was picked for *one of our monthly book club reads...an excellent choice!* I read this book in two days and was sad when I finished it because it left me wanting more. I loved the story telling from past to present back and forth. With all the detailed descriptions of each setting, I felt like I was actually there in the story, it really draws the reader into the story."

—*Patrick J. Moriarty, 5.0 out of 5 stars*

"One of my favorite books of the year. So loved it that *I have invited the author to my book club and author series* CapRadio Reads in March."

—*Victoria L., 5.0 out of 5 stars*

"This is Jan Ellison's first book and it is amazing. She brings her story to life. You feel the characters' pain and are compelled to keep reading to discover how they resolve their issues. She goes between the main character's past and present to tell the far-reaching effects of seemingly inconsequential acts of the past. I greatly recommend this book for reading by yourself or as a book club selection. Not only is it a marvelous story, it will make you think about how one small act in your past, may have completely changed your future. I think *anybody in a book club should recommend this book, as it would make for a fabulous discussion.*"

—*Diane M. Moyle, 5.0 out of 5 stars*



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JAN ELLISON

A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

WHAT READERS ARE SAYING

"Great novel! I was fully absorbed in every detail... every minute I was away from this book, *I was longing to get back!* The storytelling holds your attention with effortless finesse!"

—Elyse (Goodreads, 5-stars)

"I felt so caught up in the story that it *stayed with me for days* after I read the last word. I am so glad that I read this book! I can't wait for Jan Ellison to write more books."

—Lori Clark (Goodreads, 5-stars)

"*Ellison's writing is simply gorgeous*; it is elegant and spare when it needs to be and lush when that is what's called for—she's a born storyteller. I enjoyed the ride immensely and will certainly seek out Ellison's next novel!"

—Mary Lins (Amazon, 5-stars)

"This book lured me in almost immediately and held me captive till the last page. Jan Ellison's writes so plainly yet so poetically that I felt almost hypnotized by Annie's story. *Read this one. Go on, read it!*"

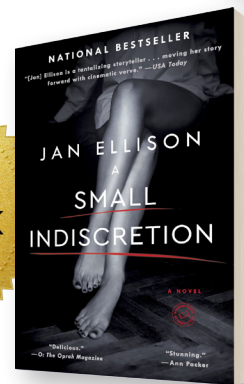
—Vox Libris (Goodreads, 5-stars)

"I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It's a coming of age novel, a life lesson to all of us about how one tiny decision can affect us in so many different ways. This story is a lot of things and spoke to me in a lot of different ways. I *highly recommend* it."

—J. Baker (Amazon, 5-stars)

"*Ellison's writing is simply gorgeous*; it is elegant and spare when it needs to be and lush when that is what's called for—she's a born storyteller. I enjoyed the ride immensely and will certainly seek out Ellison's next novel!"

—Mary Lins (Amazon, 5-stars)



USA TODAY  
BESTSELLER

"One of my favorite books of 2014. Jan's writing is impeccable; *the kind of prose that makes you want to bookmark every page* so you can revisit later."

—Susan Anderson (Amazon, 5-stars)

"I loved this story so much and what it tells us about love, mistakes, and forgiveness. By the end, I felt *I knew and cared about each of these characters*, especially Annie and Jonathan."

—Laurel-Rain Snow (Amazon, 5-stars)

"By far, *one of the very best new authors and books I have read* in 2014! The ending held me all the way; I could not put this book down until I knew the entire story. Excellent job, Jan Ellison. Bring us more."

—Anne Welton (Goodreads, 5-stars)

"One of the most *lyrical and compelling* stories I've read in a while. I eagerly look forward to future books by Jan Ellison."

—David Lamb (Goodreads, 5-stars)

"*I could not turn the pages fast enough.* This is a thriller and a romance and a coming-of-age novel, all rolled into one. And it is "literary," too. The writing is beautiful, and there are no trite, commonplace observations: the truth, and only the truth. It will not disappoint you!"

—K.B. Fenner (Amazon, 5-stars)



JAN ELLISON

A SMALL INDISCRETION *a novel*

WHAT BLOGGERS ARE SAYING

*"A Small Indiscretion* is perfect for a female reader in her twenties...or a reader in her thirties, forties, or even fifties. There is an aspect to relate to in this book for every female reader. I found this book about love and life to be mature, and it is definitely meant for the mature reader. ***Pay attention, this book will rise to become a bestseller in 2015.***"

—*Eyeliners & Erasers* (20-something blogger)

***"Best book of the year for moms...*** Well written, engaging, entertaining, interesting... Ellison is a master. I loved *A Small Indiscretion*. I still can't believe that this was Ellison's first book—it's just that good. In fact I can't believe I read this book in just one day—the entire book... deliciously good."

—*Momzinga*

"I loved it. ***I couldn't put it down.*** And I highly recommend it to you if you're looking for an engrossing, multifaceted story that combines drama, mystery, and romance with beautiful, graceful, and believable writing. It's the story of a woman's past secrets coming back to haunt her. And there's nothing cliché about it."

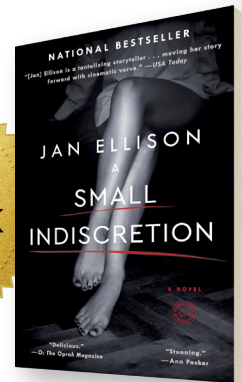
—*The Lovely Side* (20-something blogger)

"May I suggest you take a gander at *A Small Indiscretion*? It's the debut novel from author Jan Ellison, and if you like to fall into a book, then you'll definitely enjoy tripping into this one. It's an emotional read dealing with love, loss and everything in between. ***Highly suggested, so snatch it up!***"

—*The Channeling Board* (20-something blogger)

*"A Small Indiscretion* ***drew me in from chapter 1.*** While not a mystery novel, it makes it fun for the reader to try and figure out the truths before the characters know them themselves."

—*Isn't That Grad!* (20-something blogger)



USA TODAY  
BESTSELLER

"We love when a writer has a captivating story to tell, and also writes it in ***a captivating style.*** In her debut novel, *A Small Indiscretion*, Jan Ellison has beautifully accomplished both, brilliantly moving back and forth in time, peeling the layers of her life with revelations that shock the reader and the narrator."

—*The Three Tomatoes*

*"A Small Indiscretion* was a quick read for me, the storyline pulled me in quickly...***the perfect book to curl up with*** on these cold nights by a warm fire. I'm sure that you will enjoy this quick, interesting, intriguing novel and will surely ask for more!"

—*Everyday Mrs* (20-something blogger)

"An easy, un-put-down-able read. (***I read this in two days.***) Ellison writes masterfully and there were quite a few passages I bookmarked to come back to, just to reread the prose and mull over how poetically Ellison phrased some of Annie's musings and reflections. I heartily recommend this book!"

—*Musical Poem* (20-something blogger)

"Beautifully scored, and placed carefully against a palette of one's family vulnerability when the center falls apart, *A Small Indiscretion* winds us tautly into the drama of how a marriage can tolerate the worst and remain intact. A ***nicely turned, emotionally nuanced*** story about the true strength of marital and familial love."

—*The Review Broads*



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