

## Discussion Questions:

### A Reason for Hope

1. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, in the U.S. nearly one in five women and one in seventy-one men have been the victim of attempted or completed rape in their lifetime. The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network reports that an American is sexually assaulted every seventy-three seconds. Do these statistics surprise you? Or are they what you would expect? Why do you think that sexual assault is such a problem in the U.S. today?
2. Why do some of the women in *A Reason for Hope* never report that they were sexually assaulted? What other reasons might there be for not going to the police? Was Tessa's choice courageous or foolhardy? What would you have done? Could you sympathize with her delay in reporting the assault?
3. A moral dilemma at the heart of this story is based on the conflict between the assault victim and perpetrator's legal rights. Tessa believes that the laws are unfair to the victim. Do you agree? Should proving consent be so important? How could this conflict of rights be resolved?
4. Some people might say that Tessa was "asking for it" by going to Nick's house when she hardly knew him—at night. How do you feel about that? Could she be blamed in any way for what happened to her?
5. Do you agree or disagree with Tessa that the judicial system is inherently sadistic? Why? In court, does everyone come out worse even if they're on the winning side? Or is justice meted out fairly? Was Nick Payne's sentence fair?
6. How did Tessa grow and change as a result of the assault? Did any good come from it? Or is it going to hurt her for life? What about the other women in her group? How do you think their futures will be?
7. Louann says that anger often masks deeper emotions that are too frightening to feel. What might be some of those emotions? Why do women have problems expressing anger or letting it fuel constructive action, such as standing up for themselves? Could Tessa have done that in court?
8. How would you define *hope*? How does it play a part in the story? What are some of the reasons the characters might feel it? Do you believe that women can have hope about justice for sexual assaults today?
9. If we assume that we can't escape physical and psychological pain at some time in our lives, do we need to make peace with it? Does fighting it make it harder to bear? Does it help to surrender as Tessa did? Is that possible?
10. Do you think that hardship makes you stronger—and that if you've gained strength from it, nobody can take the strength away? How does this apply to Tessa? Have you ever taken pride in strength you've gained at a cost to yourself?

Kristin von Kreisler will be happy to meet with your reading group via Skype, Zoom, or FaceTime—or in person if you're in the Seattle area.

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