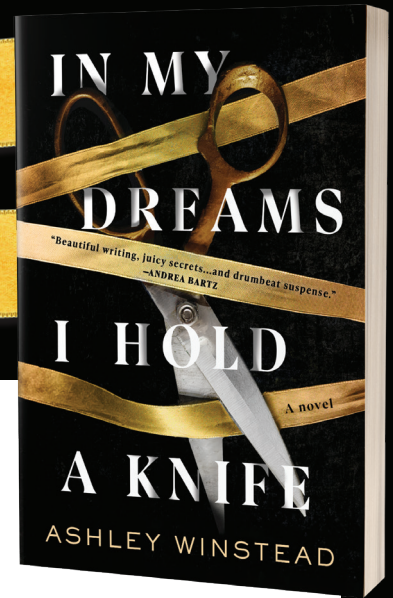


IN MY DREAMS I HOLD A KNIFE

BY ASHLEY WINSTEAD

DISCUSSION GUIDE



1. Jessica is very determined to prove herself the most successful member of the class during Homecoming. Why does she need to prove herself? How do you navigate the dangers of comparing yourself to others, especially people in your graduating class or distant social media friends?
2. Jessica describes Jack as “undeniably good” and struggles to think she could ever be good. Do you think there is such a thing as a truly good person? Do any of the characters in this book qualify?
3. Jessica’s father is not alone in wanting his child to be extraordinary. What are the consequences of placing those kinds of demands on kids? Do you think Jessica is an outlier, or do a lot of otherwise successful students worry about managing their parents’ expectations?
4. Jessica and Coop bond over lacking the privilege their friends all share. Compare their strategies for fitting in without that privilege.
5. The Phi Delta Fraternity of 2008 and the NFL of Frankie’s expectations are not supportive places for LGBTQIA+ members. What was your impression of his attempts to navigate those attitudes? What would you do in his position?
6. Jessica and Caro argue about the “girl code” when it comes to leaking the sex tape. How do you feel about the girl code? Do you think they violated it? When?
7. Courtney thinks disdainfully that the East House Seven are all so obsessed with one another that they’re practically in love. How does that level of friendship develop throughout the book? Is it healthy?
8. How is the phrase “supposed to be” used as a weapon throughout the book? Whom does it hurt?
9. What consequences would you expect for Dr. Garvey when his affairs came to light? How does tenure work against students in cases like Garvey’s?
10. Describe the development of Mint’s anger. Was there ever a moment when someone could have intervened? How could he have channeled his anger in a healthier way?
11. Each of the East House Seven carries some form of guilt over Heather’s death. Compare the ways they manage that guilt. Besides the murderer, do you think any of them should be blamed?
12. How did you view Jessica’s choice at the end of the book? Where do you see her going?