

# The Next Thing You Know

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

*The Next Thing You Know* is filled with portrayals of complicated, complex women—Nova, Kelly, Willow, Bonnie—do you see yourself in any of these characters? Did any of them inspire you, frustrate you, or make you see things differently?

Do you think Mason did the right thing in pursuing an end-of-life doula?

Explore the themes of self-care, wellness, and what these mean throughout the end-of-life process. Did this book inform or change any opinions you had on the end-of-life journey? Do you think these ideas of self-care, boundaries, and physical and mental autonomy are possible to those who are dying?

Kelly and Nova have an unconventional business relationship. Do you think their business arrangement needed more rules in place? Did their personal relationship need more boundaries? Do you think events would have transpired differently had Nova not been as close to Kelly and Willow?

Put yourself in Nova's shoes. Do you keep seeing Mason, even as you know you're falling in love with him?

Fast forward five years from now. Is Nova still practicing as an end-of-life doula? Is Kelly? What is Nova's relationship with her family like? What is Kelly's relationship with Willow like? Does Nova have any kind of relationship with Bo or Bonnie? Do you think Nova was able to fall in love again?

With Mason's illness, it made his world smaller, whereas Nova's illness freed her, in many ways. How do you think these conflicting philosophical approaches to receiving a diagnosis allowed Mason and Nova to help each other? In what ways did it provide more conflict between them?

Do you think Nova was reckless in pushing the limits to physical safety after her radical remission? Do you think, if she lived more safely, that would have been reckless for her mental health?

Mason's music is his livelihood—to the point that when he can no longer play, he feels his life is not worth living. Explore this idea that one aspect of a person's life can be so huge that it can become the only thing worth living or dying for. Have you had any experiences, or is there someone in your own life who has had such experiences, that you can understand this feeling?

When we find out Mason has died in the beginning of the novel, did you have any guesses as to what happened? Were you surprised by the ending?

Had you ever heard of an end-of-life doula before? Do you think they could play a bigger, in-demand role in our culture in the future, or do you see alternatives that can meet the same needs in different ways?

Did Mason bring a real life musical artist to mind? Did you find yourself picturing or hearing a past or current singer-songwriter when you read his scenes?

