

BOOK CLUB GUIDE



DISCUSSION GUIDE | AUTHOR INTERVIEW | RECIPE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*Spoiler Warning Ahead! This discussion guide may contain spoilers.
Save it for after you've turned the last page.*

1. Julia describes Silverberg as an invitation "to slow down and appreciate the simplicity of life without the noise in which we so often find ourselves." What place in your own life has felt like that kind of invitation? What did it teach you?
2. The setting in remote Southwest Colorado functions almost as a character in this novel. How does the landscape shape what happens between Julia and Cade? Could this story have unfolded somewhere else?
3. Early in the book, Julia thinks: "If she was still a praying woman, she'd ask God for a solution. But that hope had fled the day Nikki had died." How does Julia's relationship with God change over the course of the novel? What specific moments do you see as turning points?
4. Julia has built a career out of staying mobile. Every time she nears closure, her work lets her pick up and move. How is running from grief different from healing from it? Have you seen this in your own life, or in someone you love?
5. Cade returned to Silverberg to care for his ailing father and run the family hotel, while also still quietly helping with an active DEA case. How does he carry the competing weights of family, duty, and his own unresolved past? Do you think he handles them well?
6. Both Julia and Cade are wrestling with old betrayals (Julia betrayed by Brad, Cade by someone he once trusted). How do those wounds shape the way they approach each other? Where does new trust have to come from for them to move forward?
7. Cade tells Julia: "Instead of trying to ask why, I try to ask God, 'What's next?' One step at a time." How does that posture differ from how we usually approach grief and confusion? Is it freeing? Frustrating? Both?
8. Julia's identity has been rooted in many things over the years—her Olympic skiing future, her engagement to Brad, her career as a traveling writer. By the end of the novel, what do you think her identity is rooted in? What small rituals carry her through (her grandmother's butterscotch candies, her morning coffee, her writing)?

9. On her first snowmobile ride, Julia thinks: "God created all this!" For the first time in years, she attributes something good to God. Why does beauty have such power to soften a hardened heart? What scene in *High Exposure* most moved you in that way?
10. The Haskins family (Cade, his sister Ami, his brother Graham, their father, the hotel itself) runs through the book like a quiet anchor. How does the author portray a Christian family handling the messiness of an aging parent, a shared business, and adult siblings still under one roof? What rang true to you?
11. Christian romantic suspense as a genre asks faith and danger to share the page. How does this novel hold both at once? Did one ever feel like it was pulling against the other for you?
12. The book is rooted in a real concern—meth trafficking in small mountain communities. How did the way the author handled that issue affect you? Did the novel ask you to see something you hadn't before?
13. Late in the novel, Julia thinks: "Maybe God could redeem her life, her family. Maybe she could still have a future. Maybe she could have hope." Why "maybe"? What does that word do that "yes" wouldn't?
14. *High Exposure* is Book One of the Jagged Edges series, with more Colorado Fortitude stories coming. What threads or characters do you most want to follow next? What do you hope the author explores in the next book?



Continue the Conversation

If your group loved *High Exposure*, tell someone. Post a photo. Leave a review on Amazon or Goodreads. Give a copy to the friend who loves a good romantic suspense. The best gift you can give an author is another reader.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

Where did the seed of *High Exposure* come from? Was it a character, a setting, or a real story you couldn't shake?

I first wrote *High Exposure* after the grief and loss of a miscarriage. The “was it my fault?” questions wouldn’t stop, and I wanted to process this idea in fiction. I also knew I wanted to incorporate the unique lifestyle and activities of Southwest Colorado. I worked at a historic hotel in high school, so many of the images and ideas came out of my own experiences.

The setting almost reads like a third main character. What's your own relationship with Southwest Colorado, and what do you most want readers to feel about that landscape?

I grew up in Durango, Colorado! Silverberg is a fictional version of Silverton, a town I’ve spent a lot of time in and around (about an hour away from Durango). I grew up exploring the mountains. While I wish I was as brave as my characters, I’ve always been in awe of those extreme skiers, Olympians, and the true backcountry adventurers. While the landscape and true rugged beauty is breathtaking, it also demands a healthy awe and respect.

Several plots are rooted in real regional news. Can you talk about your research process? Did anything you uncovered change how you wrote this book?

I spent a lot of time researching the DEA. Unfortunately, it’s not unrealistic for meth labs to occur in obscure places. I listened to DEA agents talk about their experiences. Also, I asked my friends in law enforcement to lend their insight on believability. The DEA works hard for our country’s safety, and it’s a branch of law enforcement I truly began to appreciate. I also gained an appreciation for how multiple law enforcement agencies work together for our citizens’ safety.

Julia and Cade are both carrying old wounds. How did you decide what each of them would be running from, and what they would have to run toward?

For Cade, I had to have a believable reason he’d “land” back in his hometown. I knew he needed to grapple with a failure and the impact it would have on his life. He’s the oldest child, so many of the responsibilities he carries like a true oldest child (I am one; I know!) He feels the burden of caring for his family during a time of difficult transition.

Early on, I knew Julia needed a reason to travel and explore. She had to have a reason to “flee” her life, and the loss of her sister seemed like one of the biggest aches she could experience. In addition, the correlation to her sister’s death and skiing added another layer of grief for her to untangle. Of course, I wanted her to conquer her fear of skiing and loved the moment she found that freedom.

There's a deeply moving scene where Julia rides a snowmobile for the first time since her sister's accident and finds herself thanking God for the beauty around her. Where did that moment come from for you?

The majesty of the Colorado Rockies truly takes my breath away. There is no other feeling like standing at the top of a high mountain, looking around, and seeing the vast creation. It feels like you're on top of the world. Growing up, my mom would always say, "how could someone look at that and say there's no God?" To this day, when life feels unmoored, I find peace in God's creation.

Cade's line "Instead of trying to ask why, I try to ask God, 'What's next?'" feels like a quiet thesis statement for the book. Is that something you've lived, or watched someone you love live?

I have a friend who lost a child. The boy was six years old. I'll never forget: at the memorial service, the dad stood up and said those exact words. They've burrowed in my soul ever since. I have had many circumstances in life I just want to know why. Unfortunately, I've also learned sometimes we don't get the crystal-clear answer on this side of heaven. I do believe God is faithful, He promises He'll never leave us. He promises nothing can separate us from His love. So, when life unravels as it's wont to do, those are the truths I must personally grip with my entire heart. On a side note, I'm a feeler and I would never say to stuff the feelings or questions. I think there's a biblical example of lamenting. So, in my own life, I try to balance the lament with the faithful promises of God, and the hope that someday he'll wipe every tear from our eyes. With that, there's the practicality that we often have to take the next right step, moment by moment in his Peace.

Christian romantic suspense walks a particular line, offering faith that feels real, danger that feels honest, romance that's clean but charged. How do you think about balancing all three?

I hope I do it well! It's a daunting genre for these reasons! There are so many authors I admire and hope to emulate. I love love stories, so I always want the heartbeat of my stories to be the romance, and I believe the high stakes and danger offer perfect ingredients to increase tension. By nature of the genre, it places characters in extreme situations, which then allows faith to be tested and love to face the ultimate test—can it succeed to a happily ever after?

What was the hardest scene in this book to write? What about the most rewarding?

The trickiest part of this story was Cade grappling with the secret he kept from Julia. He wanted to be open and honest but couldn't figure out the balance of true honesty with the competing values of keeping her safe, maintaining Ace's cover and stopping the meth ring. As a result, the scene where he opens up to Julia and expresses that he's failed, where he guides her toward God, was likely the most complex. He was genuine, but still held part of the truth from her.

I loved the "big reveal" scene when Julia shows Cade she knows how to ski. The

The reader knows she can ski, but Cade gets the surprise on the page. I love a strong, capable heroine, and it was beautiful to imagine Julia conquering the barrier that had held her hostage for so long.

Who are the authors and the books that have shaped you as a writer of this genre?

Dani Pettrey started my true love for romantic suspense. I read one of her series after a miscarriage, and it instantly transported me away from the pain, while still bringing hope. Lynn H. Blackburn also weaves romance and suspense so beautifully—I am constantly in awe at her craft. Lynette Eason is a powerhouse, and happens to be my literary agent. She's my go-to cheerleader and role model in the genre!

Without spoilers, what can you tell us about Jagged Edges Book Two? What threads from *High Exposure* carry forward?

Book Two, *Dark Chasm*, tells Ace and Ami's story. We see the next phase of Bruce's illness and how it impacts the family, especially Ami. It takes place in the summer and Ami trains for a one-hundred-mile race through the mountains. She's in danger, and Ace comes to guard her.

Here's the working blurb: When an ultrarunner encounters deadly fugitives on a mountain run, can her professional bodyguard—and brother's best friend—protect her and bring the fugitives to justice, before it's too late?

