

# SOMEWHERE ABOVE IT ALL

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Marren was raised in a small town and married her high school sweetheart—a gifted baseball player and hometown hero. On the outside, her life seemed perfect. Do you think that society places too much pressure on families to be perfect? If so, how? In what aspects of your life do you feel pressured to be perfect?
2. Marren feels trapped by the shame of her husband's opioid addiction, which has led to an abusive marriage. If you were in Marren's shoes, how would you have reacted to this experience? Were you surprised by her feelings of shame for her husband's problems? If so, why?
3. If you discovered that someone you love was secretly struggling with addiction, what do you think you would do? How do you think you might feel?
4. Marren lost both of her parents at an early age. How do you think her grief affected her decisions? Has grief ever impacted your own decisions, and if so, how?
5. The decision to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro really pushes Marren outside of her comfort zone. What choices have you made in your own life that pushed you to do things you weren't comfortable doing? Did those choices improve your life? If so, why and how?
6. Marren begins to learn the power of her own strength when she meets a family of strangers on the mountain and attempts the daunting task of summiting Mt. Kilimanjaro with them. What "stranger" or group of "strangers" has made the biggest impact on your life?
7. At first, Chris isn't truthful about who he is, and yet he redeems himself in the end. Do you believe that people can change? When have you experienced that in your own life?
8. Some might say that Marren's relationship with Chris develops much too fast after Brody's death. Other people probably feel that Marren grieved for Brody before he actually passed away. How do you feel about her choice to move on? Do you think grief is more linear or cyclical? How soon is too soon to move on after losing someone you love?
9. On the mountain, Marren and Chris begin to share painful past experiences with each other. Do you think this was helpful to Marren? What are your thoughts on talking about private and painful experiences with people you don't know that well?
10. Brody's parents, George and Trish, remain extremely supportive of Marren after Brody's death and vow to be there for Marren unconditionally, even after she begins a new relationship with Chris. Have you ever experienced this kind of unconditional love and support? Have you ever been the person to offer this kind of love and support?
11. Marren uses the challenge of summiting Mt. Kilimanjaro as part of her effort to manage her grief. Do you think that was effective for her? If so, why? If not, what do you think she should have done instead?
12. Marren was once a prisoner of grief and shame—things that prevented her from achieving her personal goals and living her best life. What things in your life are holding you back from accomplishing your own goals and living up to your potential? How can you free yourself from those things- whether they are internal or external factors?
13. Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro was both a mental and physical challenge for Marren. What do you think the harder component is and why?
14. Therapy helps Marren, but mental health and getting help is still greatly stigmatized today. What are your thoughts on this? Why are people so reticent to seek help or admit that they are in therapy?
15. Marren finds a new kind of family on the mountain. What is your definition of a family and who do you consider to be your family? Would you say that you have a traditional or non-traditional family?