



Based Upon Availability

By Alix Strauss
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Introduction

From the very first page of *Based Upon Availability*, readers are drawn into the strange, often dark world where eight women grapple with family, sex, power, love and death. Throughout this powerful novel, Alix Strauss' characters explore the basic need for human connection while seeking to understand themselves better. Each is lonely, strong and driven, and collectively, when pushed to the edge, they must fight for their lives as they struggle to become the women they wish to be.

Questions for Discussion

1. Of the 8 main characters in *Based Upon Availability*—Morgan, Anne, Trish, Sheila, Robin, Ellen, Franny, and Lou, who did you connect with or relate to most and why?
2. Of the above characters, who do you feel changes or undergoes the biggest transformation? Who do you feel grows the least and why?
3. For a variety of reasons, women sometimes sadly lose the deep friendships they've formed with women. Why do you think Trish fights so hard to save her friendship with Liza? Have you ever been in Trish's position where you lost a best friend to married life while you were still single? What happened to the relationship?
4. Anne's list of rituals and rules seems random, but makes some sense to her—what are you most fearful of? And what is the difference between a fear and an obsession?
5. Why do you think Anne decides not to buy the print Gage has made? And what does that moment mean to her?
6. Both Robin and Vicki take sibling rivalry to an extreme. Do you think Robin's behavior was justifiable? Why or why not? Do you think Vicki deserved Robin's punishment? And do you think it will change Vicki's behavior from that point forward?
7. Why do you think it is so important for Sheila to confront Marty, and what do you think she was hoping to accomplish?
8. Ellen is desperate to have children. At what point did you think she was faking it, or did you believe her and why?
9. Why do you think Honor is so invested in helping Lou get sober? Do you think Lou will be able to hold onto her sobriety?
10. Many of the stories in *Based Upon Availability* revolve around intense and often destructive relationships. Whose relationship in the novel was the most unhealthy and why?
11. Which woman's story did you find the most disturbing and why?
12. What do you think the author was trying to say by connecting and threading these women and their lives together?
13. What do you think the title implies?
14. At some point, the hotel houses each of these women—either for an hour, several days or several weeks—offering sanctuary to some, solace to others, even despair. Why do you feel the author used the Four Seasons as the backdrop for *Based Upon Availability*?
15. What do you think the hotel offers these eight women?

About the Author

Alix Strauss has been a featured lifestyle and trend writer on national morning and talk shows. Her articles cover a range of topics and have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Time*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Esquire* and *Departures*, among others. Her other books include the award-winning collection of shorts, *The Joy of Funerals*, an anthology of blind date horror stories *Have I Got a Guy For You*, and most recently, *Death Becomes Them: Unearthing the Suicides of the Brilliant, the Famous and the Notorious*.