

THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER

MARY KUBICA

AUTHOR OF  
*THE OTHER MRS.*

LOCAL

WOMAN

MISSING

A NOVEL



"Dark and twisty, with white-knuckle tension and jaw-dropping surprises."

—RILEY SAGER,

*New York Times* bestselling author of *Home Before Dark*

# Discussion Guide

## AUTHOR'S NOTE



Photo Credit: Sarah Jaffe

Dear Reader,

I'm often asked which is my favorite book that I've written and, while it's hard to pick, ***Local Woman Missing*** ranks incredibly high on the list. These characters that you'll soon meet really spoke to me, and the twists and turns threw even me for a loop! I had no idea how malicious some of them would turn out to be—and the motivations for their actions shocked me even more.

There are so many choices when it comes to books and I'm grateful you chose mine. I hope you and your book club members have a thrilling conversation about ***Local Woman Missing*** and that you love reading it as much as I loved writing it!

All my best,

*Mary Kubica*

# Discussion Guide

## A CONVERSATION WITH MARY KUBICA



Photo Credit: Sarah Jabre

### **What was your inspiration for *Local Woman Missing*?**

I was attracted to the idea of discovering what happens when someone who has been missing returns home, and what that reentry into society is like. So often when we hear of missing people on the news, the story ends with their return. I started by writing from Delilah's point of view, where she escapes from captivity, and it was only later, as I wrote about her disappearance, that a much bigger mystery formed.

### **Which character in *Local Woman Missing* was your favorite to write and why?**

I love them all, for different reasons, but Leo and Meredith stand out as favorites. With Leo, I got to experiment with the second person point of view, which I've never written before. I enjoyed exploring a teenage voice, and watching this character grow from a resentful, sullen boy to someone far more selfless and mature. Meredith, as a working mother, trying so hard to find that work-life balance, really resonated with me.

### **Meredith's job as a doula is a big part of her character. What kind of research did you do to help inform your writing of her character? Did you do other research for the book as well?**

It helps that I have a friend who is a doula, and for years have listened to stories of sad and shocking things that go on during labor and delivery, sometimes having to do with the health and welfare of the baby and other times having to do with the rights of the mother. Most of my research was in speaking with doulas and getting a better understanding of not only what an exhausting and rewarding job it can be, but also learning about obstetric abuse and how women's rights are sometimes violated for the sake of a baby or on the whims of a physician. It was quite eye-opening. This is how the bulk of my research time was spent, though an inordinate amount of time was also spent researching if a spoon could really be sharpened into a makeshift knife!

### **We know you're a "pantser" when you write, meaning you write as you go (at the seat of your pants) rather than outlining ahead of time. Without giving anything away, was there anything that surprised you as you were writing *Local Woman Missing*?**

Almost everything! When I started the novel, I had only a few things worked out. Most of it, I figured out as I wrote. It takes time to get to know my characters and understand their motivations, and when my mind landed on the specific crime and the guilty party—or parties—my mouth almost dropped. One of my favorite things about writing is coming up with my twists, and I firmly believe that if I'm not surprised, then my readers won't be.

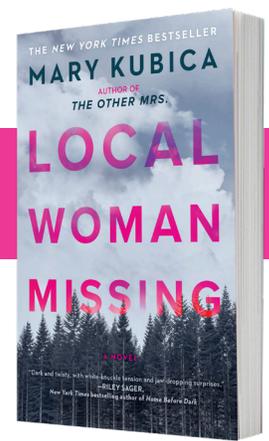
### **What do you hope readers will take away from the book?**

Writing, for me, is about entertaining readers, who look to books as an escape. I hope that readers lose themselves in this story and are shocked by its ending. This ending is one that made me think long and hard about how we don't know what we might do in desperate situations until we find ourselves in one.

# Discussion Guide

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Warning: contains spoilers!



- 1) Of the main narrators—Kate, Meredith and Leo—which spoke most to you? Was there one you connected with more than the others?
- 2) Meredith tries to find that work-life balance while having two young children and a very unpredictable schedule as a doula. How do you feel about Meredith as a mother and how she raises her children?
- 3) Leo feels a great deal of resentment toward Delilah when she returns home. Is this anger and resentment justified?
- 4) How do you feel about Josh as a husband and father? Did you ever consider him to be a suspect in the disappearances? Which characters did you consider to be suspects?
- 5) The suburban Chicago weather is as volatile as the story itself. How does the stormy spring weather add to the atmosphere of **Local Woman Missing**?
- 6) Obstetric violence and abuse is discussed in this novel. Did it surprise you to learn of the things that Meredith has witnessed as a doula or to read about Shelby's experience giving birth?
- 7) Keeping secrets from friends and loved ones is a recurring theme in this book. Have you discovered something surprising or even shocking about a friend, family member or neighbor that made you see them in a different light?
- 8) Discuss the choices that Bea and Meredith made in the car the night of the hit-and-run. Do you think Bea is a cold-blooded killer or a desperate woman with no other way out? Was Meredith as complicit as Bea?
- 9) At the end of the novel, there are many victims: two women killed, a man sent wrongly to prison, a child kept in captivity, another being raised without her mother and father, and more. Who suffered the most throughout **Local Woman Missing** and why?

# Discussion Guide

## SHELBY'S RUNNING PLAYLIST

Check out what Shelby listens to when she runs...or whatever it is that she does when she goes out late at night!

- **"I Like It"** by Cardi B, Bad Bunny and J Balvin
- **"Mr. Brightside"** by The Killers
- **"Natural"** by Imagine Dragons
- **"Till I Collapse"** by Eminem (featuring Nate Dogg)
- **"I Hope"** by Gabby Barrett
- **"Burn the House Down"** by AJR
- **"Paper Planes"** by M.I.A.
- **"Can't Stop"** by Red Hot Chili Peppers
- **"Jealousy, Jealousy"** by Olivia Rodrigo
- **"Glorious"** by Macklemore (featuring Skylar Grey)