

## Book Club/Reading Guide



1. What was the first indication to you that Charise needed help and should go to the hospital?
2. Have you ever felt an eerie, uncanny, and unsettling connection with a fictional character, the way Charise did with Margaery Tyrell and Daenerys Targaryen from Game of Thrones?
3. What do you think about the relationship and interactions between Charise and Eric through the mania, hospitalization, and diagnosis? Do you think you and your partner would behave differently towards each other during this period of chaos and confusion?
4. Early in her mania, Charise was fixated on colours, dark and light, good and bad, and symbols like yin yangs, spirals, peace signs, etc. Do you think this was relevant in her observations of her psychiatrist's dark skin? Do you think she felt comforted, or intimidated, by his darkness?
5. Can you relate to downplaying or hiding symptoms/emotions, the way Charise described in chapter 7 with winter depression? She felt it was not severe enough to require a discussion and did not want to burden Eric or her family. Have you experienced anything similar?
6. The majority of bipolar 1 patients are diagnosed in their late teens or early twenties. Charise was diagnosed at age 40. Do you think it is preferable to be diagnosed with a mental illness at a younger or older age? Why or why not?

7. While manic and hospitalized, Charise's statements were difficult to understand because of her pressured speech and lack of focus, but when explained afterwards many of her ideas and frustrations made sense. As Eric often repeated at this time, "She's not wrong." Was there anything Charise talked about while manic that you found you could relate to or appreciate?
8. Hope is critical for human beings to survive difficult situations. There were many instances when Charise clung to hope while facing dire circumstances. For example, during her first mania when she convinced herself that Eric was breaking her out of the hospital based on misinterpretations. Every time she had to choose how to interpret his words and actions that day, she chose hope. What other examples can you think of throughout the book? Do you think it was harmful or beneficial for Charise to repeatedly choose hope despite reality?
9. Do you think it is possible that the hospital secretly planted staff as patients to spy on Charise because of her assault complaint during her second hospitalization? Or do you think this is highly unlikely and an example of Charise's paranoia? Do you have any hospital/healthcare experience to support your opinion?
10. What would you have done in Charise's position when faced with those security guards lurking in the hall near her room, after the assault? Do you think confronting them would have helped her or made her situation worse?
11. How did you feel when Charise received the Alberta Health Services decision regarding her assault complaint? Would you have continued the fight?
12. What would you want to ask or say to Charise if you could?