

## READING GROUP GUIDE

The questions and discussion topics that follow are intended to enhance your reading group's conversation about Chandra Moyer's *I Met Her Before*.

1. In the first chapter, Marcia loses her adopted children. Why do you feel the loss of Jenna and Drew is the event that triggers the emergence of Marcia's traumatic memories?
2. After the children are taken, Marcia and Tony process the loss in different ways—Marcia buries herself in activism, while Tony seems to want to move past that chapter of their lives entirely. How does this foreshadow their different ways of handling the next challenge that comes in their marriage?
3. When Marcia goes to discuss her recent flashes of memory with her sister and mother, she is shocked to discover that those surrounding a pivotal moment in her childhood—the near-abduction of her sister in the Philippines—are incorrect. Have you ever been in a situation where your own memories of the past are contradicted as an adult?
4. In Chapter 4, Marcia recalls taking Jenna to Doctor Lin, a child psychologist who remarks, “It seems as though you’ve met her before.” Marcia writes it off as New Age stuff, but ultimately begins to question what Doctor Lin saw. Why do you think Moyer chose this line as the basis for her title?
5. In his book *The Body Keeps Score*, Bessel Van Der Kolk states that “trauma caused by childhood neglect [and] sexual abuse . . . wreaks havoc on our bodies.” How do you see that presented through Marcia's experiences in *I Met Her Before*?
6. How do Marcia's and Tony's differing childhoods affect their attitudes toward confronting and recognizing the racism they experience?
7. Soon after the Thompsons move to Colorado, Marcia begins to have vivid dreams, including one where a monster follows her from beneath the water. How do you interpret the symbolism of these dreams?
8. Often survivors of sexual abuse have to suffer the “second wound” of family members not believing their accounts of trauma and violence. How do you think Marcia's journey would have gone differently if she had not experienced resistance from her mother and aunt?

9. In her book *Secret Survivors*, E. Sue Blume writes, “Unable to remove herself physically from the abuse, the creative child victim finds other ways to leave. She invents many ways to stay safe and protected. Frequently this leaving takes the form of ‘separation from self’ or ‘disassociation.’ Finding, allying with, and healing the child within are necessary tasks for adults whose childhoods were damaged by incest or other abuses.” *I Met Her Before*’s second half has an intense focus on Marcia reconnecting with her childhood self, who she names Little One. Why is finding this connection such an important step for Marcia?