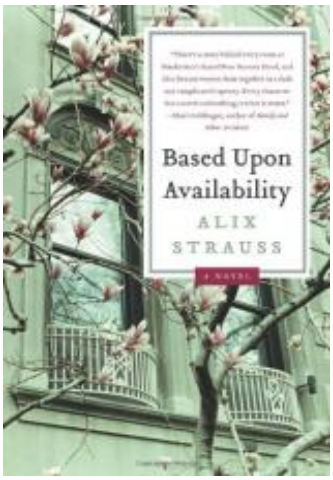
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Based Upon Availability

by Alix Strauss



About the Book

From the very first page of this stunning novel, readers are drawn into the lives of eight seemingly ordinary women who pass through Manhattan's swanky Four Seasons Hotel. While offering sanctuary to some, solace to others, the hotel captures their darkest moments as they grapple with family, sex, power, love, and death.

Trish obsesses over her best friend's wedding and dramatic weight loss. Robin wants revenge after a lifetime of abuse at the hands of her older sister. Anne is single, lonely, and suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder. Drug-addicted rock star Louise needs to dry out. Southerner turned wannabe Manhattanite Franny is envious of her neighbors' lives. Sheila wants to punish her boyfriend for returning to his wife. Ellen so desperately wants children that she insists she's pregnant to her disbelieving husband. And Morgan, the hotel manager --- haunted by the memory of her dead sister --- is the thread that weaves these women's lives together.

Discussion Guide

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?

Author Bio

Alix Strauss, the media savvy social satirist, has been a featured lifestyle trend writer on national morning shows and talk shows, including *The Today Show*, and has appeared on various networks such as ABC, CBS, and CNN. Her articles cover a range of topics, from beauty and food trends to celebrity interviews, and are published in an array of publications and newspapers such as: *The New York Times, The New York Post,* and *The Daily News,* as well as national magazines: *Time, Departures, Town & Country Travel, Travel + Leisure Golf, Marie Claire, Self, Wine Enthusiast, Esquire, and Entertainment Weekly,* among others. She is the editor of **Have I Got a Guy for You**, an anthology of mother-coordinated blind date stories (Adam?s Media, 2008). Visit her website, http://www.alixstrauss.com.

Critical Praise

"From Strauss, a novel concerning a Manhattan Four Seasons manager who witnesses the alarmingly bleak lives of women (herself included) confronting the loss of youth...These New York stories will remind some readers of Parker --- as in Dorothy, not Sarah Jessica."

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