

## QUESTIONS & TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

What do we really know about the character of Hope herself? Is she easy to know or not? What are her likes and dislikes? What emotions motivate her? Does the fact that she was isolated as a child make her personality harder to understand?

What do we know about Mona? It's stated in the book that she had no family. It's suggested that she and Don have few friends. What in their personalities motivated them to do what they did with regard to Hope? What weaknesses did each of them have? What strengths?

Contrast Mona's appearance and lifestyle with those of Don. What does it reveal about the worlds they inhabit or what they consider important? What does it mean that they continued to stay married? How did you feel about the fact that Mona left Hope alone so

soon after she arrived from Alabama or that she didn't know what Hope's favorite food was?

The book said that in school pictures, Hope's spirit had seemingly been snuffed out. What do you think was meant by this? Hope lived a very lonely childhood and it seems her parents lived lonely lives too. Does their isolation have a purpose in the story? What other characters in the book are also isolated?

How do you believe the Mark got on Hope's neck? Does it warn her of danger or provide her protection? Why is the Mark always referred to with a capital letter? Why do people outside Hope's family see the Mark as beautiful?

What do the throbbing vein in Michael's forehead and the feeling in Hope's Mark have in common?

What is the role of Henri in the book? How does Henri move the plot along? When the voice in your head speaks to you the next time, will you think of it as the voice of a guardian angel?

Does the idea that angels such as Michael and Ralph could walk among us change your view of people you meet or have met, or your idea of the world itself? After reading this book, do you know someone whom you think might be an angel?

Tabitha provides a great contrast to Hope. She has siblings, a very happy family life and a circle of support via her church. What significance is the fact that Tabitha has two personas—one for home and one for the outside world? What is the significance that she

dresses so differently from her classmates and is also the perfect daughter to her loving parents? Why is it significant that Tabitha is the daughter of a preacher? Tabitha's bedroom and possessions are described in detail. Hope's are not—why?

The scenes involving domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) and the men and girls involved in them were very dramatic. Did these scenes change your thinking about the trafficking of humans in the United States? Did you realize that these things are happening in ordinary American cities? Will this knowledge change any of your normal routines or habits? What do you think you can do to spread the word about human trafficking and try to bring it to an end?

Who do you think is at risk of being trafficked and sold into prostitution? Foreign children or native citizens? Young girls or young boys? At what ages? From what socioeconomic backgrounds? What risk factors increase the odds someone is victimized in this way? Why would a woman—such as the older Chinese woman at Wynne—cooperate in such a crime? Why would the victims—such as the Asian girls at Wynne—not try harder to escape? In what ways is Hope similar and different to the victims of DMST that she meets?

What is the significance of Michael saying that angels can neither create nor discover? How does his declaration of love for Hope provide a pivotal moment in the story?

Enoch is blind and in exile, yet is the source of knowledge. Is there significance in this?

When Mona pulls into the driveway with Hope for the first time, Hope thinks that the windows of her mother's house look sad. What do you think is the significance of observation?

There is a great deal of emphasis on names and naming in the book—for example, Michael listing out his various aliases when he reveals himself to Hope; Enoch pondering the importance of what we call things and noting the special significance of Hope's own names. What is the author trying to convey by emphasizing this point repeatedly?

The course of Hope's life was and is determined by Michael's presence in her life. By the end of the book, we learn that some of his power has been transferred to Hope as a result of the irresistible force that draws them together. Do you think Hope will eventually attain the level of power Michael possesses in this book? What does it mean if she does?

What is the significance of a heavenly being and a human being drawn together in such a physically powerful way as Michael and Hope were? What could it mean for the future of each of them? What does it say about cooperation between heaven and earth?

In many ways, this is a story about a girl struggling to define her own destiny—one that is not predetermined by her past or by fate. What are your feelings about predictions and fate, prophecies and destiny? Does Hope have a choice in how her life plays out, given the greater forces around her? Do you think the rock will be found?