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Family Reading Guide for "The Assassin's Guide to Babysitting"

Conversation starters for parents and teens

Getting Started

What This Book Is About

"The Assassin's Guide to Babysitting" follows Tru, a teenager born into a family of assassins, gifted with the rare Talent of indestructibility, and trained in knife work and stealth alongside regular high school classes. When a babysitting job becomes an assassination attempt and Tru is forced to flee with a one-year-old in tow, she must navigate a mystery about her parents' deaths, the question of who she can trust, and the complicated feelings she has for a girl who is actively trying to kill her. Fast-paced, funny, and genuinely suspenseful, this is action-thriller writing at its most entertaining.

Key Themes Your Teen Will Encounter:

- **Identity and secrecy:** Tru's entire existence requires hiding who she really is—her Talent, her training, her family background—from the ordinary world around her
- **Trust and betrayal:** The novel's central question—can Tru trust anyone?—shapes every relationship and every decision
- **Queer identity and romance:** The enemies-to-romance arc with a female antagonist is central and handled with wit and genuine emotional weight
- **Family legacy and choice:** Tru was born into a world of violence she didn't choose—the novel asks whether that legacy defines her or whether she can define herself
- **Action and consequence:** The thriller plot moves fast, but Tru's choices carry real stakes and real costs
- **Found family and belonging:** Underneath the assassin mythology is a story about a girl trying to figure out where—and with whom—she belongs

Note for Parents: This FTR title includes action violence (knife combat, assassination attempts) and a central queer romance between Tru and a female antagonist. The violence is genre-appropriate and not gratuitous; the romance is handled with warmth and humor. Parents should preview the content and be prepared for conversations about both. The book's queer representation is positive and central—not incidental—to Tru's story.

Discussion Questions

About Tru and Her World

- What does Tru's daily life look like—and what does it cost her to maintain two completely separate versions of herself?
- What does the indestructibility Talent protect Tru from—and what doesn't it protect her from?
- How does Tru's relationship with her adoptive guardian shape who she is?
- What drives Tru to investigate her parents' deaths rather than simply accept what she's been told?

About Trust, Identity, and Complicated Feelings

- What does trust mean in a world where everyone Tru has ever known has had a hidden agenda?
- How does Tru's attraction to someone who is trying to kill her complicate the story's moral framework—and what does it reveal about Tru?



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- What does it mean to be defined by a family legacy you didn't choose?
- When Tru hides who she is at school, is she being dishonest—or just protecting herself?

Conversation Starters

- If you had a rare, unusual ability, would you hide it or use it openly? What would inform that decision?
- What's the hardest kind of secret to keep—something about what you can do, or something about who you are?
- Have you ever felt like you were living two different versions of yourself in different contexts?
- What would make you trust someone in a situation where trusting them is genuinely dangerous?

Discussion Activities

Exploring Identity and Secrecy

- Discuss: "What version of themselves do teens feel most free to show—at school, at home, online, or with close friends?"
- Ask: "What would Tru lose if the people at her regular school knew who she really was? Is that loss about safety or belonging—or both?"
- Share a time you felt you had to hide something important about yourself—not to lie, but to survive a context
- Explore: What does it cost someone to constantly manage separate identities?

Discussing Queer Representation

- Approach the representation in this book as an opportunity rather than a source of anxiety
- Ask: "What does the enemies-to-romance arc do differently when the romantic interest is another girl?"
- Discuss: "What does it mean for queer teens to see a character like Tru—capable, funny, complicated—who happens to be attracted to girls?"
- If your teen is queer or questioning, let them lead. If they're not, model that this is interesting and worthy of thoughtful engagement

Conversation Tips for Parents

Creating Space for Authentic Conversation

- This book is genuinely fun—don't over-moralize it. Let your teen enjoy it and follow their lead on which themes to discuss
- Ask about the action first: "Which scene was most gripping? What would you have done in Tru's position?"
- Move into identity questions organically: "Why do you think Tru finds it so hard to trust anyone? Is she right?"
- Avoid framing the queer romance as "the thing to address"—it's one of many interesting elements, and treating it as exceptional sends the wrong message

Talking About Legacy and Choice

- Discuss: "Do we inherit obligations from our families—to continue what they started, to fix what they broke?"



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- Share your own sense of what you inherited from your family—values, patterns, roles—and how you've navigated it
 - Ask: "What does Tru get to choose about her own life, given everything she was born into?"
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Questions by Reading Level

Accessible Entry Points (for any reader)

- What is Tru's Talent, and how did she end up being raised by her current guardian?
- What goes wrong during the babysitting job?
- What question about her past drives Tru throughout the novel?
- What makes the relationship with her antagonist so complicated?

Deeper Analytical Questions

- How does Parker use the genre conventions of action-thriller to explore more personal questions about identity and belonging?
 - What does indestructibility as a metaphor suggest about Tru's emotional state—what is she protecting herself from that the Talent can't touch?
 - How does the enemies-to-romance arc complicate the novel's ethical framework around trust and danger?
 - What does the novel suggest about the relationship between the family we're born into and the person we actually become?
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Activity Ideas

Creative and Analytical Projects

- Design a "Talent" for yourself—what ability would you have, and what would it cost you to hide it?
- Write a scene from the antagonist's perspective—what is she thinking during her interactions with Tru?
- Analyze: "How does Parker use genre (action, thriller, romance) to explore themes about identity and trust?"
- Create a character profile for Tru that separates who she is at school from who she is in the field—and who she is when no one is watching

Research and Connection

- Research real historical examples of people who had to live double lives—spies, resistance workers, closeted individuals—and what that cost them
 - Explore the concept of code-switching as it applies to Tru's experience and to real teen experiences
 - Look into YA fiction featuring queer protagonists and discuss how representation has evolved over the past two decades
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"The Assassin's Guide to Babysitting" is a book that earns its fun. Beneath the kinetic action and sharp banter is a story about a girl trying to find out where she belongs in a world that requires her to be several different people at once—and whether the person she is when the training falls away is someone worth knowing and worth protecting. Parker has given readers a protagonist who is genuinely, specifically herself: indestructible in body, searching in soul, and entirely worth following wherever she goes next.