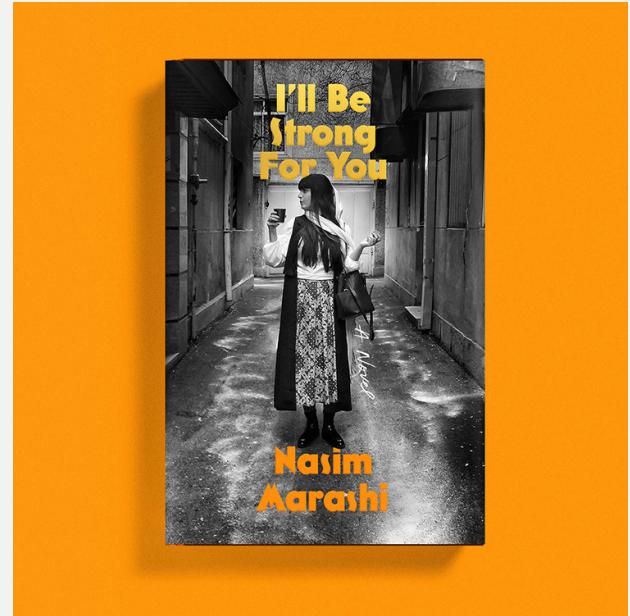


READER'S GUIDE

For *I'll Be Strong for You*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. *I'll Be Strong for You* paints a rare, intimate portrait of contemporary life in Tehran. What surprised you about Layla's, Roja's, and Shabaneh's lives and relationships? What felt familiar and relatable?
2. Nasim Marashi trained as a classical pianist. What role does music play in the novel, especially when it comes to understanding Layla's choices and ambitions?
3. If you were in Layla's situation, would you have dropped everything to follow Misagh? Or would you have stayed to assert your independence and pursue your career?
4. Roja is perhaps the most independent and spirited of the three protagonists, but her dreams are dashed when she is denied a visa, and she falls into a deep depression. Do you think there is a way for her to be content with life in Iran? Or do you think she will keep trying to leave?
5. Of the three friends, Shabaneh seems to be the one who feels the greatest responsibility to her family. Why do you think that is? How does this familial obligation hold her back?
6. Family plays a central role in the narrative, and each of the three women's families is very different. How do you think the protagonists' personalities and ambitions are shaped by their family backgrounds? How much do guilt and a sense of responsibility to their families play into their choices?
7. Discuss the impact of Shabaneh's relationship with Mahan on her choices. What do Mahan's situation and sunny disposition symbolize for the three protagonists throughout the book?
8. Marashi presents the flip side of emigration—the lives of those who, willingly or unwillingly, get left behind. How does this different perspective shed light on the emigrant experience? How does this lack of agency affect the protagonists and the plot? How does it affect your reading of the book? Would you describe yourself as someone who has (or has wanted to) leave home, or someone who has wanted to stay?



9. What did you think of the form of the book, with each season including a section from the perspective of each woman? How did the sections reflect one another, and did you gain a new understanding of certain situations from the different perspectives of each protagonist?
10. What do you think the title means for each of the characters?
11. In what ways are the friends able, or not able, to show up and be strong for one another? Are there other people you think the title might be referencing as well?
12. Pouneh Missaghi, the translator of this book, said in an interview that “language has always been truly this expansion of the world.” Do you think there are elements of the story that might have been particularly difficult to translate into English? What role do you think the translator plays in moving a novel between languages?