

ALPHA SIGMA ALPHA ALUMNAE BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
MAY 2021 – “THINGS YOU SAVE IN A FIRE” BY KATHERINE CENTER

1. At the start of the story, Cassie pummels a city councilman onstage after he touches her inappropriately. How did you react to that? Did it make you like her more – or put you off? What did you think of that moment once you knew the full story?
2. Cassie spends the early part of the story avoiding a phone call from her mother – which turns out to be a plea for Cassie to move across the country and help her with her health issues. What did you think of Cassie’s reluctance to go at the time? What was Cassie afraid of?
3. After the debacle at the awards dinner, Cassie is called into the Captain’s office, and the captain gives her some intense advice about how to survive in an all-male fire station that doesn’t want her there. Could you relate to some of her “rules” for Cassie? Have you ever been in a work situation where you had to monitor your own behavior in similar ways? If you had been Cassie, would you have still taken the position?
4. Cassie’s goal when she arrives in Rockport is to do her duty and nothing more. She doesn’t want to bond or be friends with her mother, no matter how much her mom might want to. Why do you think Cassie works so hard to keep her mom at arm’s length? What’s at stake for her?
5. Cassie’s captain has warned her that there’s one thing she absolutely *cannot* do in her new firehouse: Date firefighters. Cut to Cassie laying eyes on the rookie on her first day in the firehouse and feeling a powerful attraction to him. As the story progresses, he becomes one of her favorite things about her workday – and, at the same time, the biggest threat to her job. When she goes with him to his parents’ anniversary party, she knows she’s putting herself in danger. Why does she do that? Is it a total mistake – or is there some wisdom there, too? Would you have made the same decision she did?
6. Cassie is better at firefighting than the rookie is. Nothing fazes her, but he passes out taking blood, goes pale riding out to calls, and throws up after his first fire. What did you think of this dynamic? How is the rookie good for Cassie? How is she good for him?
7. The guys at the fire station have a lot of mixed feelings about Cassie being there, and yet it’s not the outright hostility she’d feared. In what ways do their attitudes make things harder? Are there any ways that they help her? It takes them a while to get past their assumptions about her, but it also takes her a while to do the same thing with them. In what ways did the firefighters surprise you?
8. Cassie is a master of physical courage – but her move to Rockport forces her to explore emotional courage. Diana insists, “Choosing to love – despite all of the ways that people let you down, and disappear, and break your heart. Knowing everything we know about how hard life is and choosing to love, anyway... That’s not weakness that’s courage.” How does falling in love with the rookie help Cassie learn about emotional courage? How does falling in love with the rookie impact her relationship with Diana?

9. As cruel as DeStasio is toward Cassie, he's got a tragic story of his own. Why doesn't he want Cassie's forgiveness? Why does Cassie forgive him anyway? Would you have forgiven him? How do you manage forgiveness in your own life?
10. Cassie's dad says, "The best revenge is forgetting," and Cassie says, "The best revenge is marrying a kindhearted guy with a washboard stomach who brings you coffee in bed every morning." What *is* the best revenge? Does Cassie get her revenge in the end?