

### *Discussion Questions*

The following discussion questions are included to enhance your group's reading of Yield.

1. How do you interpret the title, Yield? What exactly do you think is being yielded to, or what is yielding?
2. With which character do you most identify?
3. At the beginning of the novel, Simon talks about his filing job at the hospital, and how it "shows itself on your body." Later, he admits that he doesn't know "where the sex work goes." How does the body reveal the inner life of a person?
4. Early on, Simon claims to not find his filing job to be boring and that he never says, "Wow, I'd rather be getting fucked right now by a dude on his lunch break." Do you think Simon is bored by sex? If so, why does he hustle?
5. How does Simon use sexual encounters to learn something about himself? Or, does Simon use sex to avoid looking inward?
6. Simon's childhood memories often surface when he finds himself unable to cope, even if those memories are complicated or dysfunctional. How do you think Simon feels about his past?
7. One of Simon's memories is of a friend's sister with Down's syndrome standing behind the door on Halloween with him afraid she would open. What is the significance of this fear?

8. If you had been in Simon's position when Louis was being attacked, would you have reacted in the same way? Would you have fought back to help your friend at the risk of being killed, or would you have stood by and done nothing out of self-preservation?

9. Why do you think Louis reacts in such a way to being attacked? What does his obsessive behavior say about his sense of self after the incident?

10. Discuss Simon's relationship with Louis. They met doing sex work together, but do you think there was ever a romantic interest between them? Do you think they still had a sexual relationship while Louis stayed at Simon's apartment? Do you believe that gay men can be friends after having sex?

11. Discuss Simon's relationships with Jaron and Farmer as well.

12. How is Simon changed after being drugged at the end of Part One? He claims it wasn't that incident that caused him to quit hustling, that it was gradual. Do you believe him? Do you think it scared him straight, so to speak?

13. What would Simon have to give up in order to pursue a relationship with Aiden? How would his relationship with his friends have to change?

14. Why does Simon continue to see Mr. Bartlett even though he finds the encounters so uncomfortable? Is there something about their relationship that he needs or enjoys?

15. Is the time Simon spends in Vermont a turning point? How do his feelings for Aiden change? For his friends back home?

16. Simon writes that “pain and pleasure are interchangeable.” How is this idea evident in his life? In the others’ lives? Do you agree with his statement?

17. Why do you think Simon fought with Jaron in the subway station? Who was he really angry at, and about what? Do you feel it was a natural response to stressful circumstances between friends that could be easily forgiven and forgotten? Or was it something more deep-seated?

18. Think about some of the imagery in the story: Louis’s dwindling modeling career, Simon’s sexual behavior, the animals at the Natural History Museum, Mr. Bartlett’s desire to disappear. What does all this say about each character’s world?

19. The word “condom” is not used once in the entire novel. Did you assume that Simon was having safe sex or that he was barebacking? Consider the opposite choice: does that change your perception of Simon’s character? What does your assumption say about your own views on sex?

20. What does the ending say about Simon’s future? And the future of the character’s lives together? Where do you think Simon and Aiden are in their relationship now?