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## READING GROUP QUESTIONS

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**WARNING: These questions and discussion points contain spoilers. Please do not read on if you haven't already read *Whatever It Takes*.**

Tom Douglas is a man who has always lived by a clearly defined concept of right and wrong. But as he stands in a cold Welsh forest, still reeling from the physical and mental scars of a near-fatal shooting, he is worried sick by his brother Jack's silence. He isn't pursuing a professional case; it's a bone-deep panic for his brother. After all, it's not the first time he's disappeared.

When Jack is finally located in Venice, he hits Tom with the news that his adopted daughter, Ava, formerly known as Natasha Joseph, has been abducted. Tom finds himself drawn into a nightmare where the law offers no protection.

As the rest of Jack's family – his wife Clare and their two small children – are taken from their safe house, Tom is forced to step into a life he doesn't recognise. To save them, he must become a man playing at being a criminal, stealing a three-million-dollar painting and navigating a labyrinth of Mafia-controlled Venetian alleys.

*Whatever It Takes* is a story about the breaking point of a man's principles. It asks: when the system fails to protect those you love, can you ever truly go back to being the person you were once you've crossed the line?

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## DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. **Tom's Frantic Search:** The book opens with Tom still physically and mentally scarred from a gunshot wound, yet Jack's silence can't be ignored. He pushes aside his own recovery to trek through the dense Welsh forest to try to discover what has happened to his brother. Discuss Jack's obsession with secrecy and Tom's decision to put his brother above his own health.
2. **The Logic of a 'Tiger Kidnap':** Renzo Moretti uses Jack's family as leverage to force him into a crime. Jack insists that the Mafia don't follow the rules and refuses to call the police, fearing for Ava's life. Do you sympathise with Jack's lone wolf approach, or did his refusal to trust Tom's world make the situation more dangerous for everyone?
3. **The Ghost of 'The Pit':** For Ava, the cellar in Venice isn't just a prison; it's a psychological regression to her childhood trauma under Rory Slater. Discuss the moment she chooses to name the terrifying Finn McGuinness as her father. Was this a brilliant strategic move to rattle her captors, or a heartbreaking sign of how much her past still haunts her?
4. **The Ethics of the Art Heist:** Tom Douglas, a man who has lived by the law for decades, actually lifts a three-million-dollar painting off a wall. He tells himself he is merely relocating it, but his hands are slick with sweat. At what point did you feel Tom truly crossed the line? Did it change your opinion of him?

5. **The Scent of Venice:** The city is described not as a tourist haven, but as a labyrinth of dark alleys and brackish water where a person can be lost just by turning a corner. How did this claustrophobic atmosphere mirror Tom's internal state as he transitioned from a DCI to a man playing at being a criminal?
6. **The Fentanyl Deepfake:** The recording Jack creates using AI features a cold-blooded plan to cut cocaine with lethal fentanyl to double profits. Does the horrific nature of this drug trade make Jack and Tom's illegal actions easier to forgive, or do you think they are still complicit in a world that destroys lives?
7. **Jack's Guilt:** Jack admits that years ago he faked his own death once to save his family, but now his Ethan Blake persona has brought danger right back to their door. Discuss the psychological toll on a man who believes every time he tries to build a normal life, he is actually painting a target on the backs of those he loves.
8. **The Heywood Extraction:** Becky Robinson and her team watch Clare and the children through video probes, waiting for the signal to breach the mill where they are being held. Discuss the scene, and the impact on Clare and the children. Did you agree with Tom's decision to delay their rescue until the very last second?
9. **Tia Rukavina – Justice or Vengeance?** We eventually learn that Tia's entire criminal career as Elena Ferraro was a five-year mission to find her lost partner, Alessandro. Does her quest for the truth excuse the fact that she planned the abduction of Jack's wife and small children?
10. **The Rialto Standoff:** In the final confrontation, Tia is caught between the Douglas brothers and the Albanians she once recruited. Why do you think she ultimately chose to save Ava rather than make a clean getaway with her deepfake recording? Was it a shred of professional investigator's conscience, or something else?
11. **The Alessandro Revelation:** The book ends with Tia walking away as Alessandro is summoned to face his uncle. Discuss the bitter irony of her victory and the moment she realises Alessandro Broglio and Sandro Contarini are the same person. She found the truth she was looking for, but was it worth the woman she had to become to get it?
12. **The Final Resignation:** Tom eventually tells Philippa he can no longer rationalise criminal behaviour while doing his job. He chooses to join Jack in a new, albeit above-board, venture. Given everything he's been through, is this a defeat for Tom Douglas, or his ultimate act of freedom?