# Address Book with solid fill*Force of Nature* by Jane Harper

## Synopsis

Five women reluctantly pick up their backpacks and start walking along the muddy track. Only four come out the other side. The hike through the rugged Giralang Ranges is meant to take the office colleagues out of their air-conditioned comfort zone and teach resilience and team building. At least that is what the corporate retreat website advertises.

Federal Police Agent Aaron Falk has a particularly keen interest in the whereabouts of the missing bushwalker. Alice Russell is the whistleblower in his latest case. She knows all the secrets: about the company she works for and the people she works with. Far from the hike encouraging teamwork, the women tell Falk a tale of violence and disintegrating trust. And as he delves into the disappearance, it seems some dangers run far deeper than anyone knew.

## Discussion questions

1. Falk has an idea of who his father was; but his colleague, Carmen, has another take on things. Do you think she’s right? Do you think Falk was entirely wrong about his father?
2. ‘Never underestimate how far you’d go for your child.’ Sergeant King is talking about the Sondenbergs, but do all the parents in the novel put their children first?
3. Joel Bailey uploads intimate images of Margot Russell. Margot bullies Rebecca until she becomes anorexic. How do their parents deal with this? How much do you think parents in this novel should hold responsibility for their children’s actions?
4. During the course of the novel we learn that Falk has been living in a kind of stasis for several years. Why is that, do you think? Has he addressed this by the end of their case?
5. ‘Falk didn’t ask what the worst case was. Alone and lost among the perils of the bush, he could think of a string of possibilities off the top of his head.’ Given the number of things that might have happened to Alice Russell, were you surprised at the outcome? Did you suspect Lauren might be responsible, or did you think someone or something else more likely?
6. During the course of the novel, we learn that Jill and Daniel Bailey are the subjects of an extensive federal police investigation into organised crime. Carmen and Falk even have reason to suspect that they may have caused Alice to come to harm. Do we feel sympathy for the Baileys?
7. ‘We used to be really close, though. We dressed the same every day until we were, like, fourteen, or something ridiculous. Way too long. Like we were the same person.’ Bree and Beth each remark on how dissimilar they are now – how accurate is that, have they really grown that far apart?
8. There are two timelines in the novel – one that begins at the start of the retreat, and another that begins five days later, after Alice has gone missing. What is the effect of the two timelines? How do they shape the reader’s understanding of events, as well as of the characters?
9. As the novel progresses, different characters take over the narration. What effect does this have?

*Synopsis/Discussion questions from https://janeharper.com.au/books/force-of-nature*