

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Bliss House—the house itself—is a main character in this book. The narrator tells us, “Overall, the house gave an impression of contradicting itself, as though it weren’t sure of what sort of house it meant to be.” (p.13) In what ways does the house contradict itself?
- 2) Many of the characters feel there is something just not right about Bliss House; it had a notorious reputation—especially after the Brodsky murder. Do you believe places can hold bad energy?
- 3) The tunnels and secret passages of Bliss House appear to have been constructed long before Judge Randolph Bliss ever used them. For what purposes could those passages and rooms have been used, other than nefarious activities?
- 4) Sometime after “Michael” imprisons Allison, another man begins visiting her routinely. Why wouldn’t Allison plead with him to help her escape? Why do you think Allison is so hesitant to leave when the other man finally tells her he must take her somewhere else?
- 5) Despite their experiences with supernatural activity and Karin Powell’s death, neither Rainey nor Ariel seem keen to leave Bliss House. Do you feel you would make the same choice? If so, why?
- 6) Bertie is a very doting wife and mother. She seems driven to protect her family—including Rainey and Ariel. What might Bertie have asked of Nick when she secretly visited him?
- 7) Attorney Nick Cunetta claims Karin was his best friend. Out of respect for the law and for his friendship with her, Nick avoids speculating when Detective Lucas Chappell asks him questions relating to the case. Why would Nick make the phone call to Jefferson after Bertie’s visit if, previously, he was so careful?
- 8) Discuss how Randolph, Karin, and Jefferson have dual natures. Did other characters display dualistic behavior? Explain.
- 9) On several occasions Rainey ponders why Gerard and Karin were a couple; they were so different from one another. What reasons would Gerard have for staying married to Karin?
- 10) Bertie and Gerard are both faithful to their loved ones. Does their faithfulness do more harm than good? If so, how?
- 11) Bertie reveals a deep, dark secret about Rainey’s past. How do you feel about Rainey’s reaction to the news? Was her reaction the one you expected?
- 12) Gerard states, “...Karin’s weakness made her vulnerable to that man and that house. Randolph Bliss is evil” (p. 390). Rainey then thinks about the implications of Randolph acting out of evil, not mental illness. Do you think *evil* is a state of being?
- 13) Bliss House seems to be a hive of supernatural activity. Many characters experience strange things—hear doors slam, see ghosts, feel uncharacteristically cold, hear voices. There are even instances when Randolph, Ariel, and Jefferson seem possessed. Do you believe in the supernatural?