



BOOK CLUB  
RESOURCE GUIDE

Crime Thriller |  
Amateur Sleuth



THANK YOU FOR  
CONSIDERING BETTER OFF  
DEAD FOR YOUR NEXT  
BOOK CLUB READ

BOOK CLUB  
RESOURCE GUIDE

GLEND CARROLL

In this thrilling Trisha Carson mystery, a seemingly tragic boating accident leaves a trail of unanswered questions. When the dead man's son suspects foul play, Trisha is drawn into a web of family secrets, financial fraud, and a shocking betrayal that takes her from the serene waters of the San Francisco Bay to the high-stakes world of international crime. With keen observation and a touch of dark humor, Trisha unravels a conspiracy that runs deeper than the ocean itself, revealing a shocking truth about the Barlow family and those around them. *Better Off Dead* is a fast-paced and suspenseful read that will keep you guessing until the very end.

WORD COUNT: 83,572

PAGE COUNT: 306

KEY WORDS: Mystery | Suspense Thriller | Family Drama

DEMOGRAPHICS: Mystery readers | Readers interested in independent female protagonist | Readers interested in Marin County, CA

COMP BOOKS: *The Guest List* by Lucy Fokley | *Big Little Lies* by Liane Moriarty | *Before I Go to Sleep* by S.J. Watson | *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides

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# A Bay Area Mystery Night

## Decorations:

**Coastal Chic:** Use a color palette of navy blue, white, sandy beige, and touches of coral or seafoam green. Incorporate nautical elements like anchors, ropes, and seashells in the décor.

**Mysterious Ambiance:** Dim lighting, candles, and perhaps some strategically placed fog machines (if indoors) can create a suspenseful mood.

**San Francisco Flair:** Include photos or artwork depicting iconic San Francisco landmarks like the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, or the Bay Bridge.

**"Celebration of Life" Photo Area:** Set up a fun photo area inspired by the memorial scene in the book, complete with props like sunglasses, swimsuits, and silly hats. Guests can take photos mimicking the "happy and alive" portrayal of Andrew Barlow.

## Attire:

**Coastal Casual:** Guests can dress in comfortable, stylish attire that reflects the coastal setting, such as nautical stripes, bright colors, flowy dresses, or casual jeans. Encourage guests to incorporate a touch of mystery in their attire, like a detective trench coat, a floppy hat, or oversized sunglasses.

# THEMED PARTY SUGGESTIONS

## Activities:

- "Whodunnit?" Game: Before the meeting, create a simple "whodunnit" game based on the novel's suspects. Guests can guess the killer before discussing the actual ending.
- Mystery Trivia: Prepare trivia questions related to the book, its plot, characters, and the San Francisco Bay Area. Award prizes to the winners.
- Discussion Questions: Use the discussion questions from the previous response to guide the conversation during the book club portion of the evening. Start with a quick summary to catch up anyone who's fallen behind.
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## Extra Touches:

- Music Playlist: Play the Spotify Playlist for Better Off Dead
- Guest Book: Provide a unique guest book, perhaps a nautical-themed journal, where attendees can write their thoughts and impressions of the book and the party.

# THEMED PARTY SUGGESTIONS

## Themed Menu

### Appetizers:

- "Foggy Bay" Bruschetta: Toasted baguette slices topped with creamy ricotta cheese, a drizzle of balsamic glaze, and a sprinkle of fresh cracked black pepper.

*Recipe Note: Simple and elegant, representing the often foggy San Francisco Bay. The balsamic glaze adds a touch of mystery—dark and slightly sweet.*

- "Alcatraz Escape" Crab Cakes: Mini crab cakes served with a zesty remoulade sauce.

*Recipe Note: These are sophisticated yet easy finger foods, linking to the iconic Alcatraz Island and the feeling of an unexpected escape.*

### Main Course:

- "Golden Gate Cioppino": A hearty seafood stew with clams, mussels, shrimp, and fish in a rich tomato broth, garnished with fresh parsley.

*Recipe Note: A classic San Francisco dish that's both flavorful and visually appealing—rich and deep like the mystery itself.*

# THEMED PARTY SUGGESTIONS

## Themed Menu

### Side Dish:

- "Hidden Cove" Quinoa Salad: Fluffy quinoa tossed with chopped cucumber, tomatoes, red onion, feta cheese, and a lemon-herb vinaigrette.

*Recipe Note: Light and refreshing, representing the sheltered coves and the hidden secrets within the Barlow family.*

### Dessert:

- "Whispering Waves" Lemon Bars: Tangy lemon bars with a buttery crust.

*Recipe Note: Sweet and tart, like the subtle hints and red herrings throughout the story. The yellow color also represents the bright California sunshine.*

### The Nereus's Calm (Non-alcoholic)

#### Ingredients:

- 4 oz. sparkling water - 2 oz. fresh squeezed lime juice - 1 oz. simple syrup (adjust to taste) - Fresh mint leaves - Lime wedge for garnish
- Instructions: Muddle mint leaves with simple syrup in a shaker. Add lime juice and ice. Shake well. Strain into a chilled glass filled with ice. Top with sparkling water. Garnish with a lime wedge.

# THEMED PARTY SUGGESTIONS

## The Undertow

Inspiration: The dark, hidden secrets and dangerous undercurrents of the Barlow family's lives.

### Ingredients:

- 1.5 oz. dark rum (or bourbon, for a more intense flavor)
- 1 oz. fresh cranberry juice
- 0.75 oz. lime juice
- 0.5 oz. simple syrup
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- Cranberry for garnish

### Instructions:

Combine all ingredients (except cranberry) in a shaker with ice. Shake well and strain into a chilled rocks glass filled with ice. Garnish with a cranberry.



# SIGNATURE DRINK



Toxic by Brittany Spears  
SexyBack by Justin Timberlake  
Fallin' by Alicia Keys  
Don't Stop Believing by Journey  
Woman Like Me by Adele  
Bye, Bye Bye by N/Sync  
Landslide by Fleetwood Mac  
Sweet Dreams are Made of This by Annie Lennox/Eurythmics  
Bad Blood by Taylor Swift  
Misery by Maroon 5  
Too Sweet by Hozier  
Dock of the Bay by Otis Redding  
Still Here by Drake  
Crazy by Gnarles Barkley  
Radioactive by Imagine Dragons  
Back to Black by Amy Winehouse  
Creep by Radiohead by Halo by Beyonce  
Poker Face by Lady Gaga  
A Sky Full of Stars by Cold Play



# SPOTIFY MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS

A watercolor illustration of a cozy living room. In the center, there is a wooden chair with a curved back. To the left and right are tall wooden bookshelves filled with books. In the background, a table with a plant on it is visible. The overall style is soft and artistic, with a light color palette.

THIS GUIDE CONTAINS POSSIBLE  
SPOILERS FOR THIS BOOK IN  
THE DISCUSSION SECTION.

WARNING

1. The opening scene immediately establishes a sense of unease. How does Carroll create this atmosphere, and what is its impact on the reader's expectations for the story?
2. Trisha is a compelling protagonist. What are her strengths and weaknesses as a detective, and how do these traits shape her investigation?
3. The Barlow family is deeply dysfunctional. How does their complex web of relationships contribute to the mystery, and how does it affect Trisha's investigation?
4. The novel touches on themes of greed, betrayal, and the pursuit of revenge. How are these themes explored, and what is their significance in shaping the narrative?
5. Several characters are suspects in Andy Barlow's death. Who did you suspect early on, and how did your suspicions change as the story progressed?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

6. The setting of the San Francisco Bay Area plays a crucial role in the story. How does the landscape, both natural and urban, contribute to the overall atmosphere and plot?
7. Discuss the role of Harrison Barlow in the story. Is he a reliable narrator? How does his perspective shape our understanding of events?
8. How does the author use foreshadowing and red herrings to create suspense and mislead the reader? Provide specific examples from the book.
9. The resolution of the mystery is somewhat unexpected. Did you find the ending satisfying? Why or why not?
10. What are some of the key takeaways from *Better Off Dead*? What larger themes or messages does the novel convey about family, greed, and the human condition?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the name of the series this book belongs to?  
(Trisha Carson Mystery Series)
- What is the name of the main character?  
(Trisha Carson)
- What is the occupation of the main character?  
(Investigator/Crime Solver)
- What sport is central to the plot of Better Off Dead?  
(Swimming)
- What is the name of the dead man in the book?  
(Andy Barlow)
- What is the name of the dead man's wife?  
(Justine Barlow)
- What kind of business were Andy and Marty Barlow involved in?  
(Financial investments/a potentially fraudulent investment firm)
- Where did the main character's husband send her a letter from  
(Illinois)
- Where does the main character meet Harrison for the first time in the book?  
(at the memorial service for Andy Barlow)

# TRIVIA QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



If you want to find Glenda, she'll be in, on, or under water—and writing about it. She understands water sports on a very personal level since she swims, surfs and sails.

Glenda wrote a weekly sailing column for the *Marin Independent Journal* for 19 years. She also wrote for local, national and international sailing publications. She branched into travel writing and her features have appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Ford Times*, *Chevron USA*, *Defenders of Wildlife*, and *Bay & Delta Yachtsman*.

The Trisha Carson series is set in the San Francisco Bay area. Her books have a swimming undercurrent, based on her own experience in open water swimming. She has raced in more than 150 open water events in Northern California, as well as Hawaii and Perth, Australia. She is listed in [Openwaterpedia.com](http://Openwaterpedia.com)

Glenda tutors first-generation high school and college students in English and History. She has an M.A. from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio and a B.A. from Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. She is the president of the Northern California Chapter of Sisters in Crime and is a member of Mystery Writers of America. She lives in San Rafael, Ca with her dog McCovey.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WEBSITE: <https://www.glendacarroll.com/>

OTHER BOOKS: [Dead in the Water](#) | [Drop Dead Red](#) | [Dead Code](#)