

BOOK CLUB RESOURCE GUIDE

Crime Fiction



THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING SALLY SQUARE FOR YOUR NEXT BOOK CLUB READ

BOOK CLUB
RESOURCE GUIDE

Michael Deeze

Thomas Quinn doesn't take sides. He takes jobs — the ones the law can't touch, the ones people are willing to pay for in favors instead of cash. He has a crew that would die for him, a priest who hears what he can't bring himself to confess, and a code that's kept him alive this long. Then Sally Carlisle walks into his life, and everything Quinn thought he understood about loyalty starts to come apart. Sharp, fearless, and utterly unreadable, Sally becomes essential to Quinn's crew almost overnight — running plans, calling in favors, disappearing into rooms he can't follow her into. She says she's playing a dangerous game to buy her own way out. She's not lying. She's also not telling the whole truth. As Quinn's crew gets pulled into a fight against a corporation with more reach than any street operation he's ever crossed, Quinn has to figure out how much of Sally's game he can trust — before the double-cross becomes something he can't walk away from. *Sally Squared* is a fast, atmospheric Chicago crime thriller about loyalty, faith, and the price of a favor.

WORD COUNT: 67,040
PAGE COUNT: 346
KEY WORDS: Chicago noir | Vigilante justice | Double-cross thriller | Moral code
DEMOGRAPHICS: Readers who love hard-boiled, character-driven crime fiction
COMP BOOKS: The Drop by Dennis Lehane | The Force by Don Winslow | The Lincoln Lawyer by Michael Connelly | Live by Night by Dennis Lehane

ISBN: 979-8-90770-008-6 [HARDCOVER]
ISBN: 979-8-90770-009-3[PAPERBACK]
ISBN: 979-8-90770-010-9 [KINDLE]
ISBN: 979-8-90770-011-6 [EPUB]
ISBN: 979-8-90770-012-3 [AUDIOBOOK]

LCCN: 2026928489

Setting the mood

- Warm, low lighting
- A table set with mismatched glasses and a bottle of whiskey at the center, echoing Quinn and Reyes's dinners.

Music

- Play the Spotify playlist at a low volume through the meal, letting it build in tension as the night goes on.

Clothing suggestions

- Dark, sharp, city-noir attire
- A good coat
- Little polish — with an optional clerical-collar nod for one guest willing to play "Reyes" for the night.

Fun, easy props

- A stack of business cards on thick stock as a centerpiece (a nod to the mysterious corporate invitation)
- Two whiskey glasses set at the head of the table
- a simple "confession corner" chair off to the side

THEMED ACTIVITIES -The Favor & The Vig

Who's the Double?

Secretly assign one guest to play "the double" for the evening; other guests try to guess who it is by the end of the night based on subtle clues the "double" drops in conversation.

Pay the Vig

Each guest names one favor they'd call in from the group if they could (kept light and fun); the group votes on the best one.

Two Truths and a Confession

Guests share two true minor confessions and one invented one; the group guesses the fake, echoing Quinn's own confession scenes with Reyes.

THEMED ACTIVITIES -The Favor & The Vig

Simple, warm, comforting food that echoes Reyes's rectory kitchen — the kind of meal that grounds you, whatever else is going on outside.

Rice, Beans & Warm Bread

Serves 6–8 (a direct nod to Reyes's kitchen)

- 2 cups long-grain white rice
- 1 can (15 oz) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp cumin
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 loaf crusty bread, warmed and wrapped in a towel

Cook the rice according to package directions. In a separate pan, heat olive oil and sauté the onion and garlic until softened. Add the black beans and cumin, and simmer for 10 minutes, mashing some of the beans lightly for texture. Season with salt and pepper. Serve the beans over rice, with warm bread on the side to sop up the extra sauce.

THEMED MENU - Chicago Underworld Spread

Chicago-Style Italian Beef Sliders

Serves 8–10

- 3 lbs beef chuck roast
- 1 packet Italian seasoning mix
- 4 cups beef broth
- 1 jar pepperoncini peppers, with juice
- Small slider rolls
- Provolone cheese slices

Season the roast with Italian seasoning and place in a slow cooker with beef broth and pepperoncini (with juice). Cook on low for 8 hours, until the beef shreds easily. Shred the meat, pile onto slider rolls, top with a pepperoncini and a slice of provolone, and serve warm with a little of the cooking juice for dipping.

Chicago-Style Deep Dish Bites

Makes about 24

- 1 tube refrigerated biscuit dough
- 1 cup marinara sauce
- 1 1/2 cups shredded mozzarella
- Mini pepperoni slices
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning

Preheat oven to 375°F. Press each biscuit into a greased mini muffin tin to form a small cup. Fill each with a spoonful of marinara, a pinch of mozzarella, and a couple of mini pepperoni. Top with a little more cheese and Italian seasoning. Bake for 12–15 minutes until golden and bubbling.

THEMED MENU - Chicago Underworld Spread



A dark, layered cocktail that looks simple and isn't quite what it seems.

Ingredients

2 oz rye whiskey
1/2 oz sweet vermouth
1/4 oz amaro
2 dashes Angostura bitters
Orange peel, for garnish
Luxardo cherry, for garnish

Instructions

Combine rye whiskey, sweet vermouth, amaro, and bitters in a mixing glass with ice. Stir for about 30 seconds until well-chilled. Strain into a rocks glass over a single large ice cube. Express the oils from an orange peel over the top and drop it in, then finish with a cherry. Serve slowly, and don't be too sure you know who's buying the next round.

SIGNATURE DRINK- The Double Cross

Bad By U2
Chicago By Sufjan Stevens
House of the Rising Sun By The Animals
Sympathy for the Devil By The Rolling Stones
Been Caught Stealing By Jane's Addiction
My City of Ruins By Bruce Springsteen
The Chain By Fleetwood Mac
Dance Me to the End of Love By Leonard Cohen
Ain't No Sunshine By Bill Withers
Whiskey and You By Chris Stapleton
Angel of the Morning By Juice Newton
Boys of Summer By Don Henley
Hurt By Johnny Cash
Fortunate Son By Creedence Clearwater Revival
The Man Comes Around By Johnny Cash



SPOTIFY MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS



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

WARNING

- Quinn describes his line of work as helping people who "want judge and jury, but they don't want to pay the vig." How did you feel about Quinn's own moral code by the end of the book — did it hold up, or did it bend more than he'd admit?

- Sally Carlisle spends most of the book playing a role that even Quinn can't fully see through. What clues, in hindsight, pointed to what she was really doing — and did you trust her on a first read?

- Quinn's relationship with Reyes gives the book a quiet spiritual undercurrent alongside the crime plot. What did their conversations add to your understanding of Quinn as a character?

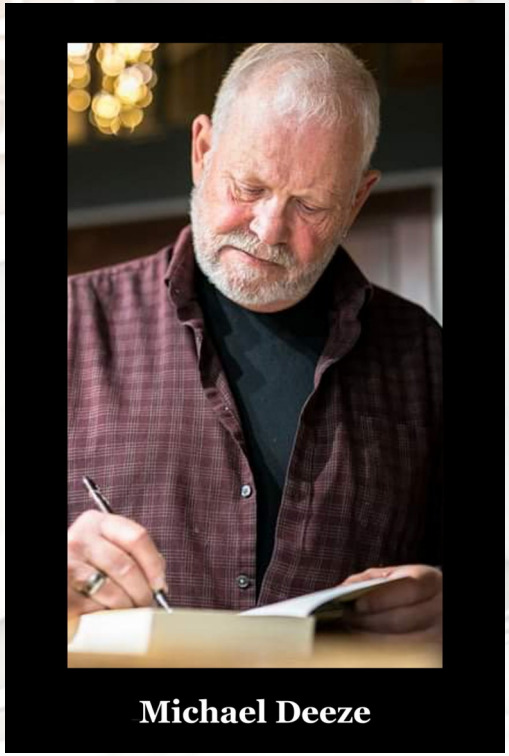
- Katja keeps a deliberate emotional distance from Quinn throughout the book, and Quinn respects it without pushing. What did you make of that dynamic compared to more typical crime-fiction partnerships?

- The title plays on Sally's initials, "S.Q.," and the idea of a "double" becoming "something else entirely." How did that title land for you once you understood what it referred to?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Quinn's crew — Katja, Charlie, Carlos, Little Manny, Frankie — functions like a found family built on loyalty rather than blood. What do you think the book is saying about chosen loyalty versus the loyalty people are just handed?
- The corporation Quinn's crew goes up against operates with a very different kind of power than the street-level threats Quinn is used to. How did that shift in scale change the tone of the book for you?
- Reyes tells Quinn, "it can end honest," even if it can't end clean. Do you think the book's ending actually achieves that, for Quinn or for Sally?
- Sally frames her dangerous plan as buying her own "off-ramp" and "retirement" from a life she's tired of. Did her reasoning make sense to you, and did it change how you judged her methods?
- If you were in Quinn's position — trusting someone essential to your crew while suspecting they might be playing you — how far would you have let it go before confronting them?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Michael Deeze

MICHEAL DEEZE was a child in the notorious Maplewood Commons housing projects of inner city Chicago, growing up hard. And fast. Surrounded by crime and violence, his family struggled to just hold their own while trying to escape their own poverty. Deeze gained street sense young, and it became the backdrop for a life of multiple indiscretions and occupations, call them what you will.

Deeze is a natural-born storyteller—in life and in print. A child of the sixties, he draws extensively from his own diverse experiences and subsequent education to introduce the hapless Emmett Casey. As U.S. Army veteran and retired Doctor of Chiropractic, Deeze now lives in Illinois after spending decades living near the forests of northern Wisconsin. He's a devoted father to his three children, a magical daughter, two grown sons, and his dog. His first novels are the critically acclaimed Bless Me Father, and For I have Sinned, The Heretic is the final novel in the series.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WEBSITE: https://authormikenelson.com/

OTHER BOOKS: The Emmitt Casey Chronicles, Thomas Quinn Mysteries, The Annie Abbott Series