



BOOK CLUB
RESOURCE GUIDE

MYSTERY



THANK YOU FOR
CONSIDERING SHADOWS
OF DECEIT FOR YOUR
NEXT BOOK CLUB READ

BOOK CLUB
RESOURCE GUIDE

TIMOTHY BALDWIN

In the shadows of Lenape City, a web of corruption tightens, threatening to ensnare everyone in its path. Rookie private investigator Cassie Maddox stumbles upon a conspiracy far more sinister than a simple case of infidelity, forcing her to navigate a dangerous world of hidden agendas and ruthless power players. Haunted by her family's legacy and driven by a fierce sense of justice, Cassie must untangle a deadly plot while questioning those closest to her. Can she expose the truth before it consumes everything she holds dear, or will the shadows of deceit claim her as their own?

WORD COUNT: 75,000

PAGE COUNT: 340

KEY WORDS: Private Investigator Thriller | Noir Crime Fiction | Urban Corruption Mystery

DEMOGRAPHICS: Age: 25-55 years old | Gender: Predominantly female, but with potential appeal to male readers as well. | Education: Likely college-educated or with a strong interest in reading and learning.

COMP BOOKS: Sharp Objects by Gillian Flynn | The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo by Stieg Larsson | The Friends of Eddie Coyle by George V. Higgins

ISBN: 978-1-64456-839-2 [HARDCOVER]

ISBN: 978-1-64456-792-0 [PAPERBACK]

ISBN: 978-1-64456-793-7 [KINDLE]

ISBN: 978-1-64456-794-4 [EPUB]

LCCN: 2025902007

Ambiance

- Lighting: Dim and atmospheric. Use lamps with warm-toned bulbs, candles (safely placed!), and maybe some string lights to create a moody, film noir feel.
- Decor:
- Black and white photographs of cityscapes or classic noir movie posters.
- A "evidence board" with string connecting character photos, places, and key plot points (use sticky notes and thumbtacks to make it interactive).
- A vintage typewriter or rotary phone as a decorative element.
- Feather boas, fedoras, and strands of pearls.
- Fake "evidence" bags with labels referencing characters and locations in the book.
- Music: Jazz or blues music playlist to set the mood.
- Dress Code: Encourage guests to dress in attire inspired by film noir or the 1940s. Think trench coats, fedoras, pencil skirts, pearls, and maybe even a touch of femme fatale.

Activities:

- Book Discussion: Start with the provided discussion questions (modified if needed to focus on the party atmosphere).
- Character Guessing Game: Write down descriptions of characters (without naming them) on slips of paper. Have guests draw a description and guess who it is.
- Noir Movie Trivia: Test your book club's knowledge of classic noir films with a trivia game.
- Create Your Own Conspiracy Board: Have guests add their own theories and connections to the "evidence board." Let it evolve throughout the evening.

EVENT THEME: Noir in Lenape City

Appetizer - The Back Alley Bites

Concept: A nod to the clandestine meeting place where Cassie overhears critical information.

Recipe: Spicy Sausage and Peppers Skewers with Crostini

Ingredients:

- 1 lb Italian sausage (hot or mild), sliced into 1-inch pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 onion, cut into wedges
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Baguette, sliced and toasted
- Optional: Crushed red pepper flakes

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Toss sausage, peppers, and onion with olive oil, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes (if using).
2. Thread onto skewers. Bake for 20-25 minutes, or until sausage is cooked through and vegetables are tender.
3. Serve hot with toasted baguette slices.

Side Dish - Lila's Lavender Bites

Concept: A sweet and savory complement that adds a touch of sweetness to the overall mood.

Recipe: Lavender and Lemon Biscuits

Ingredients:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ cup (1 stick) cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 tbsp dried lavender flowers
- 2 tbsp lemon zest

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).
2. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt.
3. Cut in butter using a pastry blender or your fingers until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
4. Stir in heavy cream, lavender flowers, and lemon zest. Gently mix until just combined.
5. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and pat into a 1-inch thick round. Use a biscuit cutter or knife to cut out biscuits.
6. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 12-15 minutes, or until golden brown.

MENU THEME: A Taste of Lenape City's Secrets

Main Course - The Genesee Country Club Comfort

Concept: Recreates a hearty meal from the story, reflecting the setting.

Recipe: Creamy Tomato Soup with Grilled Cheese Croutons

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 28 oz crushed tomatoes
- 4 cups vegetable broth (chicken broth also works)
- 1 cup heavy cream
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Slices of bread, cubed
- Shredded cheddar cheese

Instructions:

1. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion and garlic and cook until softened.
2. Stir in crushed tomatoes and vegetable broth. Bring to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes.
3. Stir in heavy cream, salt, and pepper. Blend with an immersion blender until smooth.
4. While the soup simmers, preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Toss cubed bread with a little olive oil, salt, pepper, and cheddar cheese.
5. Spread on a baking sheet and bake until golden brown and crispy.
6. Serve hot soup garnished with grilled cheese croutons.

MENU THEME: A Taste of Lenape City's Secrets

Dessert - The Broken Mirror

Concept: A dish that reflects the shattered sense of trust and the broken facades in the story.

Recipe: Broken Glass Jello

Ingredients:

- 4 boxes (3 oz each) different flavored gelatin (e.g., blue raspberry, lime, cherry, orange)
- 4 cups boiling water
- 3 cups cold water
- 1 can (14 oz) sweetened condensed milk
- 2 cups boiling water

Instructions:

1. Prepare each flavor of gelatin separately according to package directions, using 1 cup boiling water and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cold water per box.
2. Pour each flavor into a separate 8x8 inch pan and refrigerate until firm.
3. Once firm, cut the gelatin into 1-inch cubes.
4. In a large bowl, dissolve sweetened condensed milk in 2 cups boiling water. Let cool slightly.
5. Gently fold gelatin cubes into the condensed milk mixture. Pour into a 9x13 inch pan.
6. Refrigerate until firm. Cut into squares to serve.

Beverages:

Serve with Signature Cocktail – See recipe below

Or Iced Tead

MENU THEME: A Taste of Lenape City's Secrets



Ingredients:

- 1.5 oz Rye Whiskey (Represents the gritty, tough facade of the city)
- 0.75 oz Amaro Averna (Adds a dark, complex bitterness and earthy notes to represent the city's underbelly)
- 0.5 oz Cherry Heering Liqueur (A touch of sweetness and depth representing the layers of deceit and secrets.)
- 2 dashes Angostura Bitters (Adds aromatic complexity, hinting at the underlying tensions and the city's intricate connections)
- Orange Peel for Garnish (Expressed oils adding some brightness, and as garnish to show Cassie's strong spirit in a dark world)
- Clear Ice (For elegance and the "mirror" effect below)

Instructions:

- Chill a coupe or martini glass.
- Combine rye whiskey, amaro Averna, cherry Heering liqueur, and Angostura bitters in a mixing glass with ice.
- Stir well until thoroughly chilled.
- Strain into the chilled glass over a large cube of clear ice.
- Express the oils of the orange peel over the glass and use as a garnish.

SIGNATURE DRINK - The Lenape City Shadow

- Bad Guy - Billie Eilish
- Seven Nation Army - The White Stripes
- Creep – Radiohead
- Believer - Imagine Dragons
- Somebody's Watching Me – Rockwell
- Smooth Criminal - Michael Jackson
- Rolling in the Deep – Adele
- Boulevard of Broken Dreams - Green Day
- Power - Kanye West
- Control – Halsey
- Ain't No Rest for the Wicked - Cage the Elephant
- Run the World (Girls) - Beyoncé



SPOTIFY MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS

A soft, watercolor-style illustration of a living room. On the left is a tall wooden bookshelf filled with books. In the center background is a fireplace with a mantel. To the right is another bookshelf. In the foreground, there is a light-colored sofa and a wooden chair. The overall atmosphere is warm and inviting.

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

WARNING

1. Moral Ambiguity: Cassie often operates in a gray area, bending rules to achieve her goals. Do you find her actions justified, or does she compromise her integrity along the way? How would you have handled similar situations?
2. Family Influence: How does Cassie's relationship with her father, Detective Maddox, both help and hinder her as an investigator? Is she successful in stepping out of his shadow?
3. The "Trust No One" Theme: The warnings of Shayan and others contribute to a sense of paranoia. How effective was the author in creating an atmosphere where trust is a rare and valuable commodity? Did it impact your connection with Cassie as a character?
4. The Web of Corruption: The book hints at a deep-seated conspiracy within Lenape City's power structure. Were you satisfied with the extent of the corruption that was revealed, or would you have liked to see it explored further?
5. Alfred Maddox's Involvement: Uncle Alfred remains an ambiguous figure at the end of the book. What do you think his role is in the larger conspiracy? Do you trust him, or do you suspect he is involved in something nefarious?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

6. The Significance of Place: How does the setting of Lenape City, with its mix of historical charm and modern development, contribute to the overall mood and themes of the story?
7. The Power of "X": The identity and motivations of "X" remain somewhat mysterious. What are your theories about this character, and what do you think their role will be in future books?
8. Lila's Role: Lila is Cassie's closest confidante. Do you think their friendship is realistically portrayed? How does Lila's presence affect Cassie's choices and her approach to the investigation?
9. Justice vs. Revenge: The story touches upon the idea of justice and retribution. Do you believe Cassie's pursuit of justice is always aligned with what is morally right, or does she sometimes stray into the realm of personal revenge?
10. What Next? What aspects of the story or characters would you like to see further explored in a sequel? What unresolved threads are you most curious about?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Timothy Baldwin grew up in Syracuse, New York. He currently resides in Maryland where he teaches English, Creative Writing, Film, and Theatre on the middle school level. At the insistence of his own students, he began writing seriously in 2014.

He credits his love for story to his mother, who spent countless hours reading to him and his siblings when they were growing up. Growing up, he devoured the literary words of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Piers Anthony, and many others. Mysteries, thrillers, and fantasies are among the genre he most frequently reads. When he's not writing, he's reading, teaching, camping, or enjoying a live music concert.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WEBSITE: www.timothyrbaldwin.com

OTHER BOOKS: A Crock of Sundries | A Shot in the Dark series | Kahale and Claude Mystery Series | The Unwanted Guest and other short thrillers