

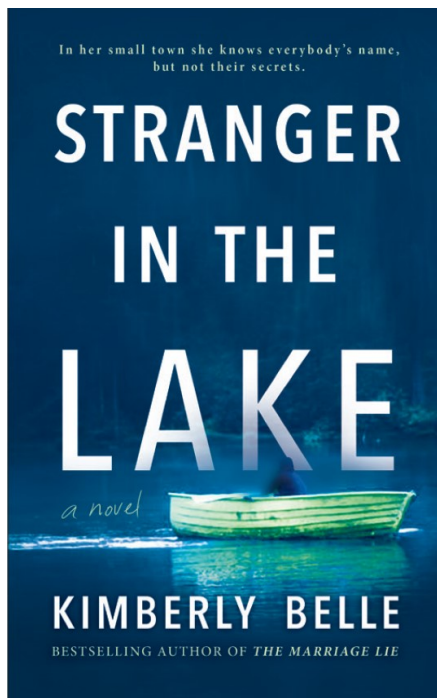
Dear Wife Readers Questions. And please note :: spoilers ahead! Proceed accordingly.

1. The story opens with Beth a few hours into her carefully constructed escape plan. Did you find her to be a reliable narrator? At which points in the novel did you trust her account of events, and when did you feel she was hiding all or some of the truth?
2. Think about the men in this novel, Jeffrey and Marcus. Were they reliable narrators? How did your perception of them change throughout the course of the story? Did you have sympathy for Jeffrey when everyone thought he'd harmed Sabine? Did you ever assume he was the one behind her disappearance?
3. Marcus is portrayed in a number of lights—a devoted friend and partner, a loving son and brother, a dedicated detective, a sneaky schemer with something to hide. Which of these attributes do you feel most accurately portrays his character, or is Marcus truly a mix of all these things?
4. How would you characterize the relationship between Beth and Martina? Did you agree with Beth's decision to trust in her new friend, and what do you think motivated this decision? Would you have trusted Martina if you were in Beth's position? And what does the story seem to suggest about female friendships and what we are willing to overlook in order to forge a connection?
5. Beth finds sanctuary in a church, where she is confronted with what she views as multiple examples of hypocrisy, from the extravagant facility to the well-heeled parishioners and Church Ladies to the overindulged Erwin Four, from pretty much everyone *except* the Reverend. How do you think her encounters affected her decision to steal the money? Were you surprised when she confessed to having taken it?
6. Evaluate the theme of violence against women in the story. What sort of statement is the author making about women who have been abused or wronged, and the lengths they must go to in order to protect themselves? Do you agree with her? And what about the lengths people will go to cover up the abuse? Not just the abuser but also his family members, who've seemingly ignored the bruises. Have you experienced something similar in real life?
7. When Marcus's mother discovers he's been untruthful about Emma's whereabouts, rather than facing what her son has done, she admonishes him, telling him to clean up his mess. Why do you think she did this? What would you have done if Marcus were your son?
8. Throughout the course of the story, people seem quick to underestimate Beth. Why do you think this is? Does taking on a new identity—changing her hair and makeup—change or solidify the way people see her, and/or the way she sees herself?
9. In order to escape her violent husband, Beth lies, falsifies documents, steals, and ultimately, kills. Do you think her actions were justified, and did you root for her to succeed? Or, are illegal actions always and in every circumstance illegal? Where do you draw the line between right and wrong when it comes to self-preservation? Does the end ever justify the means?
10. Use *Dear Wife* as a starting place to discuss victimization and the portrayal of victims. Who do you feel was the true victim or victims in this story, and who was the true conspirator? Did your opinions change over the course of the novel, and if so, how?

kimberly | BELLE

Internationally Bestselling Author

Make sure to check out **Stranger in the Lake**, coming 6.9.2020 from Park Row Books.



Her riskiest move was saying, "I do."

When Charlotte married the older and very wealthy widower Paul, it caused a ripple of gossip in their small lakeside town. They have a charmed life together, despite the cruel whispers about her trailer park past and his first marriage. But everything starts to unravel when she discovers a young woman's body floating in the exact same spot where Paul's first wife tragically drowned.

At first, her death seems like a horrific coincidence, but the stranger in the lake is no stranger. Charlotte saw Paul talking to her the day before, even though Paul tells the police he's never met the woman. His lie exposes cracks in their fragile new marriage, cracks Charlotte is determined to keep from breaking them in two.

But as secrets, and people, from Paul's past begin to surface, Charlotte uncovers dark secrets that have been simmering under the lake's waters for years. She doesn't know what to trust – her heart who knows Paul to be a good man, or her growing

suspicion that there's something he's desperate to hide.

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