

Death on the Menu

Book 8 of the Key West Food Critic Mysteries

Discussion Questions

1. Much of the action in this eighth Key West mystery is set at the Harry S. Truman Little White House. In the course of the book, some of the history of this structure is woven into the story. How do you feel about the presence of history in your mystery fiction, especially if it isn't billed as historical mystery? What did you learn about Harry Truman as you read?
2. Hayley says: "In my mother's family, lovingly prepared food meant comfort and care and even hope. A warm snickerdoodle cookie, for instance—maybe with a little chai spice added in for mystery—was a declaration of heartfelt affection. Great meals couldn't save my mother's marriage to my father because he didn't speak her language. For him, food was fuel—the dinner table merely a quick stop at the human gas station." If you had to sum it up, what would you say food meant to your family?
3. Hayley compares the work of her Tarot-card-reading friend Lorenzo to that of a therapist, or even a cop: So many problems are presented to him over the course of a work day, that he can't help but absorb some negative energy along the way. And even Hayley turns to him as a kind of therapist. Have you ever had your cards read, or perhaps your palm? How do you feel about the work of fortune-tellers in general, and Lorenzo in particular?
4. One of the serious issues raised in this mystery involves the immigration of Cuban citizens to the US, and the former US policy called "wet-foot, dry-foot." What was your reaction to this part of the story—particularly hearing about the Cuban chugs, and Gabriel's family story?
5. Hemingway plays a small but significant part in this book, though Hayley admits she is hardly a student of his writing. And Dana Sebek has a view of the writer that is quite different from that of his adoring

fans—in a nutshell, she says people admire the lore that has grown up around the man, more than his actual prose. Have you read Hemingway's work? Are you a fan? Why or why not?