

A Delicious Deception

Book 16 of the Key West Food Critic Mysteries

Discussion Questions

1. The book opens with a sheriff's office deputy inviting a very pregnant Hayley to help with a safe custody exchange. Hayley agrees to help with the custody exchange despite being nine months pregnant. What does this choice reveal about her personality? How did you feel about this request and Hayley's response? Did you sympathize with her decision or question it?
2. How does Hayley's relationship with Nathan influence her actions throughout the book? What does the story suggest about trust, partnership, and independence?
3. Deputy Darcy Rogers asks for what seems like a "small favor." What do you think motivates her? How does your perception of Darcy change as the mystery unfolds?
4. Much of the story revolves around protecting a child. How does the novel explore motherhood—from Hayley's impending labor to the young mother at the center of the case?
5. The sheriff's office animal farm open house creates unexpected chaos. How does this quirky Key West setting influence the tone of the story? Could the mystery have worked the same way without this location?
6. Both parents vanish early in the story. How did this twist shape your expectations? What theories did you form as you read?
7. A body is discovered mid-investigation. Did this turning point shift your understanding of the stakes or potential suspects?
8. Nathan is out of town during the crisis. How did removing him from the narrative affect the suspense and Hayley's choices?

9. Hayley must trust her instincts to protect the little girl. Which moments best captured that emotional struggle? Did you find yourself agreeing with her decisions?
10. Were the clues fair? Did the reveals feel earned, surprising, or both?
11. Which red herrings or twists were most effective for you? Why?
12. This book places Hayley on the threshold of a major life change. How do you think motherhood will shape the direction of future mysteries in the series?
13. Which supporting characters would you like to see expanded or revisited in future books?