

The Iron Girl Readers' Guide

After years spent mourning the death of her partner, Christine Kane, Minneapolis restaurateur Jane Lawless is moving on. Sorting through the boxes of Christine's belongings, she is shocked to discover a gun. Before her illness, Christine, a real estate agent, was selling a house for the Simoneau family. The night before her death, three family members were murdered. Jane always assumed Christine knew nothing of their family secrets, but the gun suggests otherwise. As Jane searches for clues to understand what really happened to Christine those many years ago, her pursuit leads her deep into a confrontation with danger and a painful past.

Starting Points for Discussion

1. Agatha Christie wrote in her autobiography about her dislike of mysteries having a romantic subplot. Do you agree with her views? Did you feel the romantic elements in this book enhanced or detracted from the story?
2. Doubling/duality is a major theme in the novel. Hart uses two alternating narratives, following Jane in the present and Christine in the past. The sculpture featured in the title is also a double: lost and then found, its image suggests that of the face Christine shares with Greta. What did you think of this thematic use of duality? Can you think of other examples?
3. Do you think Bernadette Simoneau made a good mother to her son, Philip?
4. If you came face to face with the spitting image of a lost love, one who wanted to get to know you, how would you react?
5. How does Hart use the dog, Mouse, in the book? (Confidant? Humor? Protector?)
6. "I almost killed a man today. You can't know how much that appalls me. But there's something that appalls me even more. I liked the feeling of the gun in my hand. It was this amazing high. Do you have any idea how terrified I am by that?" Jane tells this to Cordelia after finding Greta in the hotel room with Calvin. Did you think she would kill him? Will this revelation change her? Do you think she will be more likely to pick a gun up again? Less likely?
7. How does the Edith Wharton quote at the front of the book help to shape your understanding of the story?
8. How did Hart conceal/reveal the nature of the villain in this story?
9. Would you dress up in 20's costumes and visit the Xanadu Club for an evening of dinner and dancing? Do you think this kind of restaurant could make a go of it?

10. If *The Iron Girl* were made into a movie, what actors can you see playing Jane and Cordelia, Bernadette and Laurent? Christine?