

THE PEARL DAGGER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was your favorite scene and why? Do you have a scene that keeps coming back to mind for any reason, even a minor one? Why was it memorable? (For me, I loved the moment at the hospital when Lane and Finn are assaulted by Sean and Finn is accused of poisoning their father. I loved how it caused Lane and Finn to close ranks, to draw from each other that sanctity in the midst of chaos and injustice. I also LOVED that final scene of *Voodoo Macbeth* and Finn's reactions. "The charm's wound up!" Gives me chills. And of course when Lane realizes backstage, "Daphne's here.")
2. This idea came up in *The Gold Pawn* and will overarch into all of the books in this series, the theme from the Latin phrase that Lane discovers in her father's study: *pulchritudo ex cinere*, "beauty out of ashes." I think it sums up this era and the beauty that I wanted to highlight. What are examples of beauty coming out of ashes in *The Pearl Dagger*? My father-in-law had a large tree hit from lightning once, and his brother made a giant mantel out of it, which is what gave me the idea for the dagger itself. Do you have any specific examples where beauty came out of ashes in your own life?
3. Why do you think Finn found it so hard to see through Sean and Gwen's conniving schemes? Why could Lane see through it? (I think sometimes people have uncanny abilities in seeing truth, they just have excellent intuition. Also, I think that when you've had deception in your own life, or an extremely difficult relationship, you can see it in other people).
4. I love having some characters who are altruistic, some who are absolutely evil, and some who are complicated with the potential for both. How do you feel about the infamous gangster Louie Venetti? What do you think will be developing next for him? How about Tucker?
5. The humorous, lively, and vigorous tones of this entire series stems from all that I've read about Fiorello La Guardia. Is it surprising to you, from what you've come to understand about the 1930s? How so? What scenes or aspects surprised you? (The vitality of this era, especially the tone of the mayor's office completely surprised me! And that's what gave me the inspiration to write these books. In fact, Lane exhibits many of Fiorello's characteristics herself because I wanted the whole of the book to reflect his kind of spirit. I think, in our time, we've forgotten just who Fiorello was, and I hope to redeem that. We need heroes, especially funny ones who fight for the little guy, who soak up every ounce of life possible.)

