

## After I'm Gone Discussion Questions

by Laura Lippman

### Author Bio: (Laura Lippman website & Fantastic Fiction)

Laura Lippman was a reporter for twenty years, including twelve years at The (Baltimore) Sun. She began writing novels while working full-time and published seven books about “accidental PI” Tess Monaghan before leaving daily journalism in 2001. She lives in Baltimore.



“After I'm Gone” won the Anthony Award for Best Novel.

### Characters:

- **Felix Brewer** – Strip Club owner and bookie. Married (to Bambi) and has 3 daughters (Linda, Michelle, and Rachel). Julie is his mistress. Jewish. Disappeared in 1976.
- **Bambi (Bernadette) Gottschalk Brewer** – Felix’s wife.
- **Julie Saxony** – Stripper. Went by the name “Juliet Romeo.” Felix’s mistress. Murdered. Disappeared in 1986. Body discovered in 2001. Owned a Bed and Breakfast in Havre de Grace at time of death.
- **Robert “Sandy” Sanchez** – Retired cop and current police consultant. Specializes in cold cases. Widowed. Wife’s name was Mary.
- **Linda Brewer** – Felix and Bambi’s oldest daughter. In communications. Husband Henry Sutton. 3 children.
- **Rachel Brewer** – Felix and Bambi’s middle daughter. Smart, honest woman. Website designer. 1<sup>st</sup> husband Marc Singer. 2<sup>nd</sup> husband, Joshua. Adopted daughter, Tatiana.
- **Michelle Brewer** – Felix and Bambi’s youngest daughter. Pretty – looks like Bambi. Married Hamish Macalister. 2 children.
- **Chet Bayard** – Chef. Worked for Julie and reported her missing. Catered Michelle Brewer’s Bat Mitzvah.
- **Bert Gelman** – Felix’s best friend. Criminal Lawyer. Married to Lorraine.
- **Lorraine Gelman** – Bambi’s best friend. Has a daughter Sydney (adopted) and twin boys, Alec and Adam.
- **Andrea Norr** – Julie’s sister. Lives on a horse farm as a horse trainer.
- **Hortensia “Nabby” Saldana** – Social worker paid to raise/foster Sandy.
- **Tubman “Tubby” Schroeder** – Felix’s friend. Bail bonds man. Suzie’s boyfriend.
- **Suzie** – Julie’s stripper friend. Dating Tubby.
- **Manzanillo** – Resort city in Mexico. By ocean.

## Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. Do you consider this book a Mystery/Suspense or is it just plain generic fiction? Why?
3. The book was written from multiple characters' points of view, as well as flipping between decades. Was it successfully done? Did it help or harm the story?
4. This story takes place over the course of 50 years (1959-2012) with anchor points in 1976 (when Felix disappeared), 1986 (when Julie disappeared), and 2012 (when the investigation restarted). Did that make it more interesting or did the long time frame harm the story?
5. Compare Felix's perspective of his relationships to Bambi and Julie in the first chapter to the reality these women express through their own perspectives.
6. Did you find the characters in this story believable?
7. Who is/are the main character(s) in this story?
8. Which secondary character did you like the best? Which did you like the least? Why? Did you change your opinion of these people as the novel progressed and more information was revealed about them?
9. We begin the novel with Felix Brewer's point of view as he goes on the lam. Yet we don't return to Felix until the very last chapter, in which we see Felix through the eyes of his housekeeper, Consuelo. Why do you think the author chose to begin and end the story this way? Is this novel about Felix?
10. Young Bambi describes herself as a prize, and she certainly knows how to manage the game. What is it about Felix that draws her in so quickly and completely? Do you think his absence for much of their adult life influenced her feelings for him positively or negatively?
11. Julie converts to Judaism in order to fit into Felix's life. What does that say about Julie? Felix doesn't even realize that Julie converts for him. What does that say about Felix? What about their relationship?
12. As Sandy investigates Julie Saxony's murder, he notes that everything seems too coincidental. He finds it odd that her body's location is so near Bambi's childhood home; that her disappearance occurred on the tenth anniversary of Felix's disappearance; and, finally, that her body "wasn't supposed to be found." He deduces that the killer wanted "people (not cops)" to think Julie had run off with Felix. In the end, for what "people" did the killer set up that assumption and why? What were the consequences of this choice?
13. This novel revolves around two "father figure," older male characters. Felix provided well for his family and valued his role as a father...until he left town. Sandy is a policeman, but who see his life as little more than a string of failures, especially regarding his son, Bobby, and his wife, Mary. What do you think the novel has to say about the total of our successes and shortcomings at the end of life?
14. The investigation of Julie Saxony's case is anything but straightforward. What clues did you pick up along the way, and which red herrings distracted you the most? Did you figure out who did it before the ending was revealed?

15. Crow tells Sandy that his wife, a private investigator, "says money is the thing that drives people. Money and pride." Money—who has it, who doesn't—indeed plays a major role in this story. Identify some of the ways money influences the decisions made by characters in this novel. Was Julie's murder really about money in the end, as Sandy believes, or something else?
16. Sandy admits that "the things [he] thought he remembered best were the things he was getting wrong." But he also wonders if, as long as they were loving (particularly regarding Mary), it really mattered whether his memories were inaccurate. What do you think? How else do memories play a role in the mystery of *After I'm Gone*?
17. Identify characters in the novel who struggle with stereotypes (i.e. Sandy as a blond, blue-eyed Cuban). Who defies the stereotypes that others put on them? In what ways do some characters seem to support their stereotypes?
18. When Bambi almost offhandedly remarks that she's going to confess to Julie's murder, what did you think? Was it immediately apparent to you—as it was to the police—that she was lying? Why would she do this? What secrets did you unravel or fail to catch along the way to the big reveal?
19. After the truth is revealed, Bambi muses aloud to Bert, "It would be nice if at least one of us got what we wanted in this world. At least our kids seem to have. There's some comfort in that." What do you think—do any of the characters in "*After I'm Gone*" get what they want? At what cost?
20. What did you come to think of the five women at the center of the novel – Bambi, Julie, Linda, Rachel, and Michelle? Did your opinion of them, and their actions, change throughout the novel? If so, how? If not, why not?
21. Discuss the significance of the title, "*After I'm Gone*." In what ways does it refer to Felix? To what other characters and situations might it also apply?
22. Laura Lippman has written a number of other books. Will you read them?

### References:

- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/l/laura-lippman/>
- GoodReads – <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/18089975-after-i-m-gone>
- LitLovers – <http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-fiction/9667-after-im-gone-lippman>
- Laura Lippman website - <http://www.lauralippman.net/>
- Novelist – <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/novp/detail?vid=2&sid=cd62fbc4-b648-463e-a550-b2e5b8fcea31%40sessionmgr1&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#UI=10232957&db=neh>

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## Laura Lippman's Books

### Tess Monaghan Series

1. Baltimore Blues (1997)
2. Charm City (1997)
3. Butchers Hill (1998)
4. In Big Trouble (1999)
5. The Sugar House (2000)
6. In A Strange City (2001)
7. The Last Place (2002)
8. By a Spider's Thread (2004)
9. No Good Deeds (2006)
10. Another Thing to Fall (2008)
11. The Girl in the Green Raincoat (2011)
12. Hush Hush (2015)

### Stand-Alone Novels

- Every Secret Thing (2003)
- To the Power of Three (2005)
- What the Dead Know (aka Little Sister) (2007)
- Life Sentences (2009)
- I'd Know You Anywhere (aka Don't Look Back) (2010)
- The Most Dangerous Thing (aka The Innocents) (2011)
- And When She Was Good (2012)
- After I'm Gone (2014)
- Wilde Lake (2016)

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### If you liked After I'm Gone, try...

- The Shape of Snakes – Minette Walters
  - Invisible City – Julia Dahl
  - Identical – Scott Turow
  - A Good Killing – Allison Leotta
  - The Other Widow – Susan Crawford
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