

Jar of Hearts Discussion Questions

by Jennifer Hillier

Author Bio: (from Fantastic Fiction & Jennifer Hillier website)

Jennifer Hillier was born in Toronto, which is where she spent the first three decades of her life. Now nicely settled in the Pacific Northwest, the only thing she misses — other than family and friends — is snow. A member of International Thriller Writers, she's always been drawn to dark fiction, even though she sleeps with the lights on when her husband isn't home.



Characters:

- **Georgina “Geo” Shaw** – (26) – Highschool friends with Angela Wong and Kaiser Brody. Highschool girlfriend of Calvin James. 14 years later she has an MBA and is a VP at Shipp Pharmaceuticals. She also has a cosmetology certificate. Fiancé is Andrew Shipp. Father is Dr. Walter Shaw. Her mother died when Geo was 5 years old. Testifies against Calvin James in Angela Wong’s murder trial. She gets a 5-year sentence at Hazelwood Correctional Facility for aiding in hiding Angela’s body.
- **Cat Bonaducci** – Geo’s friend in prison. Killed someone in a drunk driving accident. Has cancer.
- **Henry Bowen** – (2 yrs old) – 1st child victim. Strangled. Has “See Me” written on his chest in a heart in lipstick. Adopted by Amelia and Tyson Bowen. Buried with Kim Tolliver, his birth mother.
- **Detective Kaiser Brody** – Geo’s and Angela’s friend from high school. Had a crush on Geo. Arrests Calvin James 14-years later for Angela’s and 3 other murders. Ex-wife is a nurse. Having an affair with Kim Kellogg, his married police partner.
- **Ella Frank** – Leader of the black prison gang at Hazelwood. Convicted of murdering 2 rivals. Wife of a drug lord. Brings drugs into the prison. Geo, who is mixed race, trades financial advice for protection in prison.
- **Cliff and Roberta Heller** – Live across the street from Geo’s father. Roberta hates Geo. Cliff finds the body of the 1st new victims – a boy (Henry Bowen) and a dismembered woman (Kim Tolliver).
- **Calvin James** – “Sweetbay Strangler” – Convicted of 4 murders. Dated Geo Shaw when she was high school. 4 years older than Geo. Killed Angela Wong 14 years previous. Strangled and dismembered her. Escapes prison.
- **Dominic John Kent** – Baby adopted by Nori & Mark Kent. Foster son of Ursula Archer. Sends fan mail letters to Geo when she is in prison using superhero names.
- **Nori & Mark Kent** – Adopts Geo’s newborn son. Divorce later. Nori takes Dominic. Nori is then killed in a car accident. Dominic ends up in foster care.
- **Emily Rudd** – (4 yrs old) – 2nd child victim. Strangled. Has “See Me” written on her chest in a heart in lipstick. Adopted by Drs. Daniel Rudd and Laura Friedman. Buried with Sasha Robinson her birth mother.
- **Angela Wong** – (16) – Very popular high school cheerleader and volleyball star. Best friends are Geo Shaw and Kaiser Brody. 1st victim of the Sweetbay Strangler. Strangled and dismembered. Body found 14 years after she went missing. Father is Victor Wong, a Microsoft executive. Mother is Candace (Wong) Platten.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. What does the title "Jar of Hearts" reference?
3. This book was written from multiple points of view. It also switches between "current time" and the time of the murder when Geo was 16. Was it done well? Did you like seeing the story from both points of view? Why or why not?
4. This book is broken down into parts - titled with the stages of grief. (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance.) Why do you think that the author did that?
5. Who was your favorite character? Who was your least favorite character? Why?
6. Given that Geo was a fairly mature, level-headed and independent 16-year-old, were you surprised that she allowed herself to be in such a controlling, abusive relationship with Calvin in high school? Were there any signs that indicated she was susceptible to this?
7. When Calvin approached Angela's car for the first time at the 7-Eleven, why do you think it was Geo he was attracted to, and not Angela?
8. Do you believe it's possible to compartmentalize parts of your past the way that Geo did, in order to move forward with your life?
9. Why do you think Calvin never told anyone what Geo did when helping to hide Angela's body?
10. In prison, the Mammoth, Geo's bunkmate is murdered. Geo then enters into a business partnership with fellow inmate, Ella Frank. Do you think Geo is simply trying to survive, or do you think she's a natural criminal, whether she admits it to herself or not?
11. Why was Cat Bonaducci so important to Geo? What does that relationship say about Geo?
12. Kaiser kept tabs on Geo for the entire five years she was in prison, paying a prison guard for information about her. He tells himself that he did it in case Calvin contacts her, but beyond that, what do you think his reasons were?
13. Given his birth parents and the way his adoptive parent's marriage ended and Dominic's history, do you think Dominic's actions were the result of nature or nurture? Both?
14. Why do you think Calvin comes to Geo's aid in the end?
15. What do you think of what happens to Calvin at the end of the book? What about what happens to Dominic Kent?
16. Do you agree with Geo's decision to have Dominic buried in the family plot at the local cemetery? Why or why not?
17. Is Geo a hero? Villain? Both? Just human?
18. After all that she did - and all the secrets she kept, and lies that she told - do you think Geo deserves to be able to start her life over? Or should she still be in prison?
19. Hillier has written a couple of other books. Will you read them?

References:

- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/h/jennifer-hillier/>
- Jennifer Hillier – <https://jenniferhillierbooks.com/>
- No Apology Book Reviews: <https://www.noapologybookreviews.com/interview-with-jennifer-hillier-jar-of-hearts/>
- Novelist – <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.clevnet.org/novp/detail?vid=2&sid=2487fdef-7aca-4406-a22c-85a0e8c06d8b%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#UI=10664732&db=neh>

Jennifer Hillier Books

Serial Killer Files

1. Creep (2011)
2. Freak (2012)
3. The Butcher (2014)

Stand Alone Novels

- Wonderland (2015)
- Jar of Hearts (2018)
- Little Secrets (2020)

If you liked Jar of Hearts, try...

- Hide and Seek – MJ Arlidge
- Heartsick – Chelsea Cain
- The Unseeing – Anna Mazzola
- The Shadows – Alex North
- The Good Daughter – Karin Slaughter