

Questions for Discussion

A Lovely, Indecent Departure

In my legal opinion—that's how he began, his Honor—in my legal opinion, what's in the child's best interest. As if law and raising a child are somehow connected.
—from *A Lovely, Indecent Departure*

1. Why did the author choose **A LOVELY, INDECENT DEPARTURE** as the title to this novel? What meaning, or meanings, does the title have in relation to the story and its characters?
2. Parenthood and law both serve to shape the backbone of the novel, as they each equally prompted Oliver's abduction. What do you think the author is trying to say about the legal system and its role, intended or otherwise, in deciding what's in the child's best interest?
3. Very little hint of Anna's past is revealed in the story, and it's not until later and only briefly that we encounter her mother, father, and grandmother. What do you imagine her life to have been like? How do those chapters connecting her to her past reflect or relate to Anna's present?
4. Acceptance, or lack of, plays a critical role in the novel, as it, along with tolerance and forgiveness, are life-altering lessons. What do you think the author is saying about marriage and culture that makes parenthood more difficult?
5. This novel deals intently with relationship and the effect relationship has on determining the future. There is Anna and her history with Evan. Her renewed relationship with her father. Monroe's strained relationship with his daughter. What do you think the author is saying about how the behavior of those we love, or once loved, informs our decision-making?
6. After decades of dedication to upholding the law, by the end of the novel, Monroe appears to have faltered in terms of the legality and his attitude toward Anna and the kidnapping. How else has Monroe's professional attitude changed? In what direction do you see his future heading? With Rebecca? With Grace?

7. The author alludes to but rejects stating clearly the abandonment that led to Anna's losing custody of Oliver (page 77-78). Why do you suppose he thought it not important to elaborate more on this? What other examples of abandonment can be found in the novel? Is the effect the abandonment has on the character different for each of them?
8. The author eschews traditional literary devices, such as the use of quotation marks and translation of Italian dialogue, throughout the novel. What do you think was his reason for this? Does it help, hurt or serve no difference to the telling of the story? How does the use of language suggest something of the alienation experienced by the characters in the novel?
9. It was once considered rare for the father to be awarded primary custody and rarer still for to a mother, a teacher no less, to resort to kidnapping the child in retaliation, but in this novel the roles are flipped upside down. How might this story have been different had Anna had been awarded custody? Would Evan have been more content with the judge's ruling and his acceptance. What does this say about the difference between men and women?
10. Once Anna and Evan are swept over the bridge they are, for all practical purposes, swept out of the story as well as the focus turns solely on Oliver. Anna's welfare and whereabouts are eventually revealed, but Evan's fate is not. How do you feel about the author's decision to end the novel this way? What do you think happened to him?