

HANGING THE DEVIL

BY TIM MALEENY

READING GROUP GUIDE

Perfect for lovers of private eye narratives and true crime, this book is packed with heart-warming relationships, jaw-dropping plot twists, and ruthless criminals will have you on the edge of your seat after each page.



ABOUT THE BOOK:

When a helicopter crashes through the skylight of the Asian Art Museum, an audacious heist turns into a tragedy. The only witness to the crash is eleven-year-old Grace, who watches in horror as people are killed and a priceless statue stolen by two men and a—ghost? At least that's how the eerie, smoke-like figure with parchment skin and floating hair appears to Grace. Scared almost to death, she flees into the night and seeks refuge in the back alleys of San Francisco's Chinatown.

Grace is found by Sally Mei, self-appointed guardian of Chinatown. While Sally trains Grace in basic survival skills, her erstwhile partner Cape Weathers, private detective and public nuisance, searches for the mysterious crew behind the robbery before they strike the museum a second time. As the clock winds down, Cape enlists aid from some unlikely allies to lay a trap for a ghost who has no intention of being caught—nor of leaving any witnesses alive to tell the tale.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION



1. What is the significance of the title, *Hanging the Devil*?

2. How do Cape's relationships in the novel affect his choices and moral outlook? How has Cape Weathers' character evolved over the course of the series?

3. How does the setting of San Francisco impact the plot? Would the story read differently if it took place somewhere else?

4. How does Maleeny adhere to, evolve, or reinvent the traditions of the mystery genre?

5. How does Sally Mei's complicated childhood influence her relationship with others, especially Grace?

6. The scene of suffering homeless people surrounding the museum mirrors the tragedy of the robbery at the museum and that feeling of helplessness against forces beyond your control. Do you feel the descriptions in this scene is significant? Why or why not?

7. The narrative alternates between each character's perspective, but every thread connects back to the overall plot. How does this writing technique impact the flow of the story, the transitions between chapters, your reading experience, and the reader's connection to each character individually?

8. Loss is a recurring theme in the novel. How does each character deal with loss, and is that similar to how you deal with loss in your own life?

9. When Sally focuses on Grace's eyes in the storage room, she is clearly aware there is a little girl behind the stoic facade that Grace presents. What does this say about children who experience trauma at a young age?

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10. How would you describe Wen and Bohai's relationship in the labor camp? Is it reminiscent of bonds forged under traumatic circumstances that you've read or heard about from people during wartime, incarceration, or natural disasters? How does their relationship affect your view of human connection and empathy towards shared trauma in society?

11. The tone of this novel strikes a balance between mystery, suspense, humor and, at times, horror in the gothic tradition. (The ghost, scenes at the labor camp, etc.) How do the more graphic scenes (Han's death, the pliers scene, the laboratory, etc.) affect the overall tone of the narrative?

12. Wen is surprised when Peng takes interest in knowing his wife's name. What does this say about human connection or the tendency to keep things at a distance during hard times? Do you feel that adversity brings people together or pushes them apart?

13. The "ghost" is described as someone raised as a son but forged as a weapon. What does this say about his upbringing and does this insight help you understand his motivations better as he interacts with other characters and takes certain risks as he pursues his goal?

14. There are several key characters in the book. Which character's story did you identify with the most?

15. How do Cape, Sally, and Beau's perspectives on Grace change as the story progresses? How does she affect each character personally, both in terms of their emotional response and the choices they make to play by the rules...or not?

16. Mogwai believes people crave the simplicity of childhood. Do you think this is true of the human condition? What does that say about society as a whole, and does that psychological insight explain the different kinds of governments and rulers civilizations have had over the centuries?

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17. Wen decides the best thing he can do for Grace is keep the knowledge of her location to himself, as he accepts that he may never see her again. What does this say about sacrifices parents often make for their children, without their children realizing it at the time?

18. A sense of not belonging, a feeling of isolation or loneliness, is one of the themes in the novel, which we see with Grace being alone in an unfamiliar country, the ghost being an outcast from his own society, Sally's choice to keep things at an emotional distance, even Cape's choice to become a private eye. How does Grace's situation affect her relationship with Sally Mei, and how does it change Sally's perspective on her own life?

19. As Cape develops a working relationship with Maria, it becomes clear they are similar in their outlook but very different in their approaches. How do they influence each other, and how do their respective skills complement each other?

20. What was your initial reaction when you realized Mogwai's true identity, that this character is actually Wen's wife, Chu Hua?

21. After Maria decides to leave her job she finally feels free and truly independent, which seems to suit her personality. How does Cape help her come to the conclusion that working for Interpol isn't right for her? What does she realize about her former employer and herself?

22. The crime and ensuing investigation has a dramatic impact on many of the principal characters, changing their circumstances, relationships and perspectives. What do you think will happen to the characters who made it through to the end of the story? What do you think will they do next?

ABOUT TIM

Tim Maleeny is the author of the award-winning Cape Weathers series of mysteries and the bestselling comedic thriller JUMP, which The Boston Globe called “hilarious” and Publishers Weekly described as “a perfectly blended cocktail of escapism.”



The second son of an organic chemist and a registered nurse, Tim grew up in New Jersey surrounded by his parents’ books, shelves crowded with pulp adventures and paperback mysteries from the thirties and forties. He started writing crime fiction when he moved to San Francisco near Chinatown, a city with a great noir tradition and a neighborhood that inspired many of his early stories.

Tim currently lives at an undisclosed location in New York City with his remarkable wife, Kathryn, and their two daughters, Clare and Helen. When he’s not procrastinating by doing excessive research on exotic poisons, famous art heists or deadly sea creatures, Tim is working on his next novel, a screenplay, and a book for young readers

HANGING THE DEVIL is Tim’s fifth Cape Weather’s mystery.

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