

## THE ANSWER TO HIS PRAYERS

### READER'S GUIDE

1. Badger, the main antagonist in *The Answer To His Prayers*, is a complicated and enigmatic figure. Dot remembers him as a smart, quirky kid, desperately in need of attention and care. Others see him as a stone-cold psychopath, probably from birth. What kind of intervention might have made a difference in how he turned out, or was he really born broken? Do you think there is any humanity left in Badger? Any possibility of redemption?
2. Dot goes to see therapist Dr. Rogoff because of doubts she's having about her upcoming marriage with Frank. She chooses him because he specializes "in problem solving, coaching, and actionable advice for getting on with life," and Dot wants a quick fix rather than a prolonged course of psychotherapy. But Dot gets more than she bargains for with the unexpectedly perceptive and confrontational Rogoff. What sorts of defense mechanisms does she use to keep his uncomfortable insights at arm's lengths?
3. "We therapists are bad clients, aren't we?" Dot remarks to Rogoff. Do you think this is true? If so, why?
4. Although Dot does not want to "review her childhood again" in her therapy sessions with Rogoff, she ultimately can't avoid it. How do you think her parents, their relationship with each other and their relationships with their daughter have affected Dot's relationship with Frank?
5. "We are all changed by time, some for the better, others for the worse," Dot muses. What do you think of this statement? How have you and other people in your life been changed by time? For the better? For the worse?
6. Early in the story, Dot observes that "Seeing with your ears is a form of occupational synesthesia particular to dispatchers. A cop watches the action in real time, but a dispatcher is left to the cruelty of an active, maybe overactive, imagination." Later, she wants to tell [Rank] Tom Rutgers "that you don't have to have a gun in your face to be traumatized; it's enough to be exposed to the horrific details of someone else's ordeal." Can hearing and imagining a traumatic event ever be as bad as directly witnessing one? Why or why not?
7. Throughout the series, Dot and Frank have come into conflict over Dot's penchant for risk-taking and putting herself into dangerous situations, and *The Answer to his Prayers* is no exception. But this time, Frank also offers to help and gets involved with Dot's attempts to negotiate with Badger. What's changed for Frank? Do you see him getting more involved with solving crimes?

8. Do you think Rivka's fears about anti-Semitism are justified? Are there other reasons why she might not want to go to Iowa for Dot's wedding?