

Book Club Kit



**"DARKLY SATIRICAL AND WILDLY ENTERTAINING...
A RIVETING THRILLER FROM THE FIRST PAGE TO THE LAST."**

**—AMY TINTERA, *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF *LISTEN FOR THE LIE***

Discussion Questions

1. Margo's desperation for a house quickly escalates from minorly concerning behavior to an unhealthy obsession. When do you think she crosses a line?
2. Even as Margo crosses the line to get her dream house, did you find yourself sympathizing with her anyway? Why or why not?
3. What does the house come to symbolize for Margo beyond just being a place to live?
4. Margo discusses how she and Ian sold their "starter home" to upgrade to a bigger house. What does this say about Margo, or about American consumerism?
5. How do you think Margo's childhood and background influence her choices and desires as an adult?
6. How does Margo's fixation on the house affect her relationship with Ian?
7. Do you think Ian's infidelity drives Margo to the edge, or is it Margo's unhappiness and obsession that pushes Ian away?
8. Why does Margo ultimately decide she can live with Ian's infidelity? Why was she willing to overlook this major crack in the picture of the perfect life she wanted?
9. How might the story have unfolded differently if Ian had shared her obsession?
10. The novel satirizes the overheated housing market. How does the story highlight inequities in access to housing and the "American Dream"?

Discussion Questions

11. What commentary does the novel make about the role of money, privilege, race, and social status in homeownership?
12. Did the book make you reflect on your own experiences (or fears) about housing, renting, or buying a home? How so?
13. What scenes made you laugh even though you felt you “shouldn’t”?
14. Do you think achieving “the dream life” is possible without compromise—or does striving for it always demand some level of obsession?
15. What would you have done in Margo’s situation? Where would you draw the line?

AN INTERVIEW

with Marisa Kashino



MARISA KASHINO was a journalist for 17 years, most recently at *The Washington Post*. She spent the bulk of her career at *Washingtonian* magazine, writing long-form features and overseeing the real estate and home design coverage. She grew up near Seattle, graduating from the University of Washington with a degree in journalism and political science. She lives in the DC area with her husband, two dogs, and two cats. *Best Offer Wins* is her first novel.

Your debut novel, *Best Offer Wins*, is a dark and twisty thriller about a woman obsessed with buying her dream house... at any cost. In the midst of a seller's market, her pursuit of a "perfect life" turns deadly. What inspired this story?

I spent several years as a journalist covering housing and real estate around Washington D.C., including during and immediately after the pandemic when the market became even more unhinged. I heard countless stories about lines for open houses that stretched around the block; about people going to showings in the middle of the night because the typical slots were all full; about places getting 50 or 60 offers. I was also crazy enough to buy my own house during this period!

Given the high emotional and financial stakes involved in house hunting, it felt to me like the perfect starting point for a twisty, suspense-filled thriller. I also hoped that by fictionalizing the modern-day housing crisis, I might be able to hold a magnifying glass up to some of its more troubling effects (without making readers feel like they were doing homework).

The house Margo wants costs over a million dollars in an affluent Washington, D.C., suburb. Why did you situate your characters in this high socioeconomic class? How did their social status influence the story you wanted to tell?

At its most fundamental, *Best Offer Wins* is a story about class and wanting more. So, I thought it was important that my protagonist start with a lot, and still feel deeply unsatisfied. This is the disease of capitalism, right? In fact, the reader learns early on that Margo has actually already been a homeowner once, but she sold that home because she wanted a bigger one, in a fancier neighborhood, and now she finds herself stuck in a rental apartment (in a brand-new luxury building). She describes herself as "a gentrifier" (her "starter" home was a fixer in a "transitioning" neighborhood), and comments on the growing homelessness problem, seemingly with little regard for who might be on the losing end of things. If these little moments give the reader pause or generate some discomfort, good! That's the point. And I felt it would only be possible to achieve that if the story was set in a world of privilege.

Throughout *Best Offer Wins*, Margo crosses many moral and legal boundaries, justifying her actions at each turn. Readers could interpret her behavior as unhinged or understandable

– or both. How did you view this character as you wrote the book?

This question makes me laugh because there were so many points as I was writing the book when I stopped and wondered if I'd pushed Margo too far—if readers were going to think she was just too despicable. But what I was aiming for—and what I hope I created—was a character who goes to unhinged lengths for understandable, relatable reasons. Margo is the product of a culture that defines success in material terms.

She also feels very acutely the particular pressures of being a high-achieving woman approaching middle age (to have the great career, the great marriage, the perfect family, and, of course, the dream home). On top of that—and without giving away too much—she carries the emotional freight of a childhood that often leaves her feeling inferior in a city where, as she puts it, “everyone else graduated from the same Ivies as their parents.” In short, her behavior should be shocking. But I hope you're also shocked to find yourself relating to her, and maybe even rooting for her.