

Reading Group Guide

1. “The American appetite for the Duke and Duchess of Windsor is just insatiable,” Lulu explains about her assignment for *Metropolitan* magazine. About the royal family she says: “We like to gossip about them, all right. Just not to let them rule over us and all.” Is this still true today? Do you follow the news and gossip about the British royal family? If so, why?
2. Jack the bartender describes Lulu as “a real tough dame” and “a real honest dame..honest and kind-hearted.” Do you agree? Does your assessment of Lulu change the more you see her in action, and the more you learn about her back story?
3. “I went mad after [my baby] was born,” Elfriede tells Wilfred, “An extreme form of nervous melancholy.” Do you know women who have had the same mental health crisis? How does Elfriede manage to survive? How does post-partum depression change her life?
4. Elfriede tells her doctor “A wife would be a beast if she didn’t love a man such as my husband. She would be unworthy of life.” Is that just the “melancholy” talking? What do you make of their marriage? Does Elfriede truly love Gerhard? If you were in their shoes, would you make the compromises they do?
5. Discuss the ways Lulu and Elfriede’s stories intertwine. What characteristics do these two women share, even though they’re separated by a generation and different cultures?
6. “The circumstances of your childhood determine your character, the entire course of your future, your fate, your destiny, all of it. You are just a mere slave to your subconscious.” Lulu reflects. Do you agree? How did her childhood and her relationship to her

newspaper mogul father shape her life and affect her destiny? What about the other characters in this book? How did their childhoods direct the course of their lives?

7. Why did Charlotte decide to leave Elfriede and take the girls with her? Would you have done the same? How did that decision change the course of everyone's lives?
8. What motivated Elfriede to disappear after Benedict's birth? Was it the right decision to make? How would Benedict and Margaret have turned out had she stayed and raised them?
9. Lulu says of the Duchess of Windsor, "Women like Wallis never, for a single moment, imagine themselves guilty of anything." What is Wallis guilty of? Why does Lulu hold her in such contempt? What did you think of her and the Duke? When they appear in the last scene of the book, does Lulu have any sympathy for them at all? Do you?
10. What do you think becomes of Lulu and her family in the decades after the war? What about Elfriede's children? Have you glimpsed any of the characters from THE GOLDEN HOUR in Beatriz Williams's other novels?