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HIDDEN BODIES by Caroline Kepnes **Discussion Questions**

1. In the first chapter of *Hidden Bodies*, Joe attempts to please his girlfriend, Amy, with flowers. But she wants keys. This is the first of other “deals” he makes. Were you surprised that he gives her keys? Do you think love/success requires a leap of trust?
2. Joe Goldberg is often described as a “charming psychopath.” Did you find that you rooted for Joe? At which points, if ever, were you rooting for him? At which points did you feel uncomfortable?
3. When Joe moves to Los Angeles, he is surrounded by people with aspirations who haven’t achieved success in the film industry. He says that he doesn’t want to “catch aspirations.” And then, one could argue, that’s exactly what happens. How do dreams help us and hinder different characters in the novel?
4. Joe is particularly brutal in his murders of Henderson and Delilah. What did you think about the level of detail involved here? Joe feels that he is ultimately sparing them both from pain. Explain your thoughts on this rationalization.
5. In both books, *You* and *Hidden Bodies*, Joe meets what many describe as “unlikable” characters. Does this affect your feelings when he commits murder? Discuss the concept of likability in literature. Do you have to “like” the people to like the book?
6. Would you say that Love and Forty Quinn have a codependent relationship or a close sibling relationship? Consider also Forty’s “script,” *The Third Twin*. Discuss the importance of family in this novel.
7. *Hidden Bodies* is a book that defies categorization and everyone connects with a different aspect. How did you read it? As a thriller, a satire, etc.?
8. While roaming the Quinn family estate, Joe imagines what he might have made of his life had he had this kind of wealth. Do you agree? Do you think life is easier or more challenging with a financial safety net? Does wealth provide emotional security?



9. Joe does not succeed in murdering Forty Quinn. Do you think this is because, deep down, he ultimately really didn't want to kill Love's brother? Or do you think he was simply careless? And the woman who does kill Forty is named Julie Santos. Joe thinks of her as Saint Julie. What do you think about that?
10. The ending is open ended with Joe in prison, but he feels optimistic about his future because there is love in his life, because Love is pregnant. What do you think will happen to him? When you finish the book, do you want him to be free to build a family of his own or do you want him to remain incarcerated?
11. Stephen King described Caroline Kepnes's style as "hypnotic and scary . . . never read anything like it . . . a little Ira Levin, a little Patricia Highsmith, and plenty of snark." Discuss the importance of voice in this story. How did you feel spending so much time in Joe's head? What do you think led Kepnes to create a voice that is often described as "twisted"? Is that the word you would use? Who is more twisted, Joe or his victims?
12. In interviews, Caroline has talked about writing her first novel after a grueling year of familial hardship, culminating with the loss of her father. She also has said that her career as a pop culture journalist inspired her, which is why her work is full of references. Do you play psychologist when you read fiction, try and figure out what inspired the author? And are you more prone to do this when the material is dark?