

## PLAYED TO DEATH READING GUIDE

1. How would you describe Scott Drayco? How does his complicated, tragic, and musical past affect his psyche and the way he looks at life?
2. Drayco was born with a form of synesthesia, where he hears sounds as tones, colors, shapes, and textures. Is this a blessing or a curse? Is this something you'd be happy to have?
3. How does the theme "the inability to let go of the past leaves no room for a future and leads to disillusionment and tragedy" relate to the characters in the book?
4. What do the various appearances of birds (owls, geese, grackles, hummingbird tattoo) signify?
5. Drayco feels that the Cape Unity case touches "upon so many tragedies, was so symbolic of the consequences of war—and the jealousy, greed, and hatred upon which war was based—it was hard to separate these two deaths from the many." What are other ways war reaches beyond its time and place to affect future generations?
6. Councilman Randolph Squier works in an office with "*In Spiritu et Veritate*" ("In Spirit and in Truth") carved into the front of the building. How is this not evidenced in Squier's own behavior and choices? And how is observed or defied by others in the book?
7. Darcie Squier and Drayco are both vulnerable, which almost leads to disaster before Drayco is able to pull himself away. Do you think they may eventually wind up together? Would that be a good thing or not?
8. Meanwhile, Deputy Nelia Tyler is trapped in her own unhappy marriage. Yet she remains loyal to her handicapped, but bitter (and possibly abusive), husband, even as she finds herself attracted to Drayco. What should a spouse's loyalties be in the face of such difficult circumstances?
9. Drayco uses the counterpoint of Johann Sebastian Bach's music to help him puzzle through difficult concepts and ideas. But in one part of the book, he plays Reece Wable's music box, with the tune "The Windmills of My Mind." How are the lyrics relevant to the case and how do they mirror Bach's complicated counterpoint? \*
10. Reece Wable and Sheriff Sailor both mention kismet (fate, destiny), and Drayco himself envies people who believe there is a purpose for everything, even murder. Did destiny play a role in Drayco solving the case?

11. At the beginning of the novel, Drayco is suffering from nightmares from his previous case that ended in tragedy. How has this changed by the end of the book? Can he let go of the past enough to move on and continue his quest to help people through his crime consulting work?

\* Excerpts from "The Windmills of My Mind":

Keys that jingle in your pocket, words that jangle in your head  
Like a circle in a spiral, like a wheel within a wheel  
Never ending or beginning on an ever spinning reel  
As the images unwind, like the circles that you find in  
The windmills of your mind.