

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the heart of *Unpredictable Webs* are the relationships between parents and children. What was the author trying to say about how intrusive parents Ashleigh and Conrad, Paige and Mark, and Nelson should be in monitoring what their daughters and sons are up to, especially during their offspring's teen years?
2. How critical a role does sibling rivalry play in the novel? If Callie and Marnie and Neil and Rick had been closer to one another, could the story possibly have played out in the same way?
3. What advice would you have given to Ashleigh when she was listening to Marnie confess to cutting herself? How might the author have written the scene if Marnie had shared this intimate detail with Conrad instead?
4. Which character would you most want to have lunch with? Why?
5. What would you say Ashleigh's greatest strength is, both as a wife and as a mother? What, on the other hand, is her greatest weakness? Did her maternal love impede her from making a wise decision at any point in the novel?
6. Were Rick's threats to the lives of Neil and Callie plausibly conveyed? How would permanently injuring or killing either one or both of them have changed the outcome of the novel?
7. In this fourth novel by Darlene Quinn, Mitchell Wainwright attempts to be reconciled with and to understand his gay son, Tony. Would the story have unfolded differently if Tony's role in finding and rescuing Callie and Neil had been larger?
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8. Did the author convey Helen's circumstance—that of an aging woman with a degree of dementia—with humor and compassion? Did Helen's desire to become a cougar enhance or detract from the story line?
9. When you discovered, just as Rick did, that he hadn't shot and killed his mother's boyfriend, Joe, how did you react? What kind of mother could allow her innocent child to be tried for such a crime? Should any of that backstory be factored in during Rick's trial for kidnapping?
10. Describe the different kinds of prejudices that emerge in the novel. How did the biased characters express their opinions, either in word or deed? Did the victims of those prejudices share anything

in common?

11. The author portrays Erica as a recovering alcoholic and Nelson as someone who suffers with the chronic pain of fibromyalgia. In your opinion, does this make them more sympathetic characters? Do their frailties play a role in their budding relationship? Do they influence their parental behaviors?

12. Where do you see Viviana and Gino going at the end of this novel? Do you think Marnie and Neil will continue to grow their friendship? Will it be possible for Nelson and Rick to overcome their misunderstanding of one another and actually have a meaningful relationship?