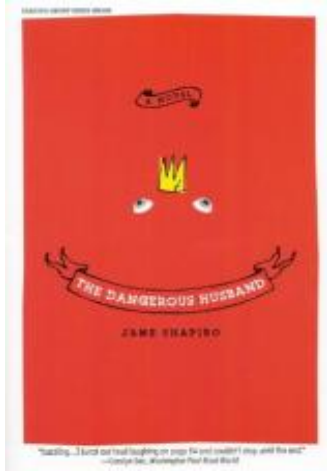


The Dangerous Husband: A Novel

by Jane Shapiro



About the Book

Once upon a time there was a husband who had many admirable qualities but was accident-prone..... and a wife who, in order to survive her marriage, thought she just might have to kill him. This mordant, glittering novel tells their story.

Discussion Guide

1. During the dinner party where they first fall in love, the heroine tells her future husband, "Here's something I know: I am not going to kill. I mean unless it was in some extreme self-defense situation, to save my own life, and that's just normal. Otherwise, even if I felt abused or victimized, believe me, I'm not murdering anybody." How could this woman evolve into a potential murderer? Was she driven mad, or just pushed too far?
2. To the casual observer, Dennis is an ideal husband? adoring, attractive, affluent?and with him the narrator has an enviable life. Why then do you think she ends up falling in love with strangers instead of the husband who trips over himself to please her? Have you ever had a similar experience?
3. The female mugger, the woman in the restaurant rest room?female strangers automatically recognize the heroine's peril and her homicidal tendencies. Did you experience a flash of recognition here as well? Why is it that many women share that murderous impulse?
4. In many ways the narrator feels trapped, both figuratively and literally. (Even some of the doors to her house are nailed shut.) And yet during most of the story she's still physically able to leave. Why do you think she doesn't? When she does run away from home, why does she come back?

5. Did you find Dennis a completely sympathetic character, or an increasingly sinister one? Did your feelings change when the heroine learned the fate of Dennis's three previous wives?
6. There's a lot of sex in this book, but as the story progresses, the couple's lovemaking sessions begin to end abruptly. Did you share the narrator's befuddlement? Why do you think Dennis leaves her in such a peculiar way?
7. Pets in this novel often end up the innocent victims of their owners. In what ways do they also represent their owners? How do their individual fates parallel their owners'?
8. As the story unfolds, this couple becomes increasingly isolated?their friends don't call them, the woman who introduced them claims not to have been involved. Is their loneliness their own doing, are they in fact unlikable people, or is it simply a condition of modern marriage?
9. The novel is presented in the form of a testimonial?the narrator is telling her story to an unseen audience, making an attempt to set the record straight. As she says early on, "Now, these two years later, I don't know much but I'll tell you all I know. You convict me if you will." To whom do you think she's speaking? Do you believe her version of the story?
10. There's a fairy-tale element to the story ?Dennis is the handsome prince, he and his bride are poised to live happily ever after, there's even a wise frog offering advice. How much of the story as a whole did you think was pure fantasy? Was there a particular point where you felt the story departed from reality?

Author Bio

Jane Shapiro's first novel, *After Moondog*, was a finalist for a Los Angeles Times Book Prize, a New York Times Notable Book, and among the Village Voice's 25 Best Books of the Year. Her short fiction and journalism have been published in *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Mirabella*, and *Ms.*, among many other publications. She lives in Princeton, New Jersey.

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