



## Guarded Discussion Questions

1. When you think of the title, *Guarded*, where do you see that theme carried out throughout the book?
2. The old stone house represents more to Annie than just a building. Why is she so attached to it? What places do you have that are sentimental or meaningful to you?
3. Why does Beulah struggle with the idea of searching for her brother's lost child? Have you ever used excuses to avoid a situation that makes you uncomfortable?
4. Vesta's family and Annie's family are intertwined by history and geography, yet separated by race and culture. Can you think of those possibilities in your own family history? Is there anything you can do—either by forgiving, like Vesta, or apologizing, like Annie—to repair the relationship?
5. Beulah is irritated with her houseguest, Rossella, yet she realizes later they may have more in common than she allowed herself to believe in the beginning. Is there a situation in your life where you struggle to see beyond the irritations of a relationship?
6. Betty Gibson seems intent on stirring up trouble, especially with Annie. Why?
7. Annie's relationship with her father comes back to haunt her new relationship with Jake. How does she finally make her peace with her old hurts? Or has she?
8. How did Jake contribute to the strain between Annie and himself?
9. Beulah's sacred space is in the kitchen, where she feels most in control. She also uses the garden and the family cemetery for reflection and prayer. Do you have places that serve certain needs in your life?
10. Annie experiences small town prejudice against her family name due to the unsavory actions of her relatives. Have you ever experienced this—or possibly been on the other side of it?