



THE BUZZARD TABLE: Book Club Discussion Guide

Irrelevant factoid: Vultures are the only known animals whose stomach acids can kill cholera and anthrax. When Diclofenac was used to treat herds in India and Nepal, the vultures that fed on the carcasses were brought to the edge of extinction. As a result, cholera outbreaks became more widespread. Those governments have now banned the drug for use in animals and are trying to breed the vultures back to their original numbers.

Margaret Maron on the writing of *The Buzzard Table*: My brother is a lover of fireworks. Class B fireworks. He has helped stage some of the big festival displays around the country and one year, he decided to shoot off a few reports, those big attention-getting boomers that shake the earth, out here on the farm.

(Yes, illegal. Who do you think Deborah's nephew Reese is modeled after?) It was not July and very soon, a patrol car was parked in our drive and a uniformed officer was asking if we had a permit. "Ma'am, we've had 32 calls about these. One old man almost had a heart attack. He thought Iraqis had landed and were bombing us." I was amused that someone might think Iraqis would land here in "Colleton County." Then some real live terrorists were arrested. They lived on the other side of the woods from us. Next I read that we had a rendition airport here in the county. So maybe that old man had reason to worry.

Having taken Deborah and Dwight to NYC, I thought it only fair to bring Sigrid Harald down to NC and that airport made a good hook.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

1. It is often said that a Margaret Maron book is "a mystery and more" in that she puts serious economic and social issues into the traditionally-plotted whodunit. What are some of the issues in *The Buzzard Table*?
2. If you have read some of the Sigrid Harald series, do you think Sigrid's emotional nature is more like Anne's or Mrs. Lattimore's? How do the three women differ?
3. Deborah's late mother and Mrs. Lattimore were very distant cousins and although both came from the same social strata, they married very different men. Which do you think had the happier marriage?
4. Young Jeremy Harper is an idealist who has joined Patriots Against Torture to focus attention on situations he considers immoral. How do you feel about torture? Is it ever right? Is it always wrong? Or are you uncomfortable taking a stand in either direction?
5. Dwight tells Sigrid that "needed killing" used to be a valid defense against a homicide charge when the law does nothing to stop a sociopath. Martin Crawford clearly believes this. Do you?
6. Deborah has never told Dwight how she came to be appointed to the bench and he has never told her much about his time with Army Intelligence. Are the two equal?

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