



Whiskey Tango Foxtrot (2014)

By David Shafer



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Discussion questions taken from *Book*

1. Each of WTF's three main characters seem to be opening a different book. In such a case, how soon should the author promise the reader that separate strands of a story will come together? How much time does the author have to make a case for the reader's continued engagement?
2. Did you find it hard to credit that there would be this amazingly competent NGO logistician working alone in a beautiful and exotic city? If in fact you found Leila too conveniently badass, were there other elements of her character that mitigated that effect that made her seem real to you?
3. We meet Leo as he is experiencing sudden and troubling shifts in mood while biking to work one morning. It soon becomes clear that he has substance-use issues and possibly dodgy brain chemistry. But it is also possible that he is a moral seeker with fair questions about how Things work? Is life "a dense thicket of pain and scrabbling" or "a wild godly fable in which [you] figure prominently" (p. 34)?
4. Is Mark a charming jerk or an uncharming jerk?
5. "Motivation in an Unjust World"—the essay that Mark published on a blog and that led to his flukish fame: Do you think it was probably a good essay, or do you think it was probably crap, like *Bringing the Inside Out*, the famous self-help book that it would later become?
6. Have you ever ridden backward on an airport golf cart (p. 183)? Have you been in one of those first-class lounges? What was it like? Wouldn't it be cool if Ikeas comprised a global network of safe houses?
7. When did you first know that *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* was a coded title? Do you know any of that beautiful poem that is the International Radiotelephony Spelling Alphabet ("Alpha, Bravo, Charlie...")?
8. Had you any acquaintance with the world game Jumble before page 184? Did you try to solve that puzzle as you read it in the book? Or is that the kind of Easter-egg shit you skip over when reading fiction?
9. Did you notice that the entire novel is a palindrome?
10. How much of this did you think might be non-fiction? Have you noticed how the Security

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State is rising all around us?

11. How do you feel about the TSA? Isn't it a little strange that we all agreed to subject ourselves to their airport screening experience? How much of that do you think is actually Security Theater? Like, say, if they had taken half a banana right out of your daughter's hands: would you think, *Thank God these people are keeping us safe?* Or would you think: *WTF?*

12. Did you see that they are now selling as advertising space the bottom of the bin in which they make you put your shoes? WTF?

13. Do you know that there really is a signals-intelligence agency within the U.S. Department of Defense called the Central Security Service? Haven't heard much about these guys, have you? Did you know there really are buildings in Virginia and Maryland that have more floors than the buttons in their elevators would indicate? That the *number* of terrorist organizations with which the United States is at war is classified?

14. You know it's not a cloud, right? You know it's a vast network of secure servers storing everything we do and drinking our rivers to keep themselves cool?

15. That 5-zettabyte listening post and data-storage complex the NSA built in Bluffdale, Utah—did we ever vote on whether we wanted one of those?

16. Do you have any doubt that they can put whatever they want on your computer, and take whatever they want from it?

17. What is paranoia and what is skepticism? Is there a clear line between the two?

18. Would you take the eye test? Would you like to take it now? Go to www.takeetheeyetest.com. (Look about ten degrees above—and just to the right of—your webcam lens. Relax).

19. Does Mark make it to *Sine Wave 2*?

Author Bio:



- * Birth: Unknown
- * Where: New York City, NY
- * Education: Harvard College and Columbia School of Journalism
- * Awards: N/A
- * Currently: Lives in Portland, Oregon

Read Alikes:

Invasion of privacy by Christopher Reich
Stephen Coonts' Deep black by Stephen Coonts
Tom Clancy's splinter cell: operation barracuda by David Michaels
(Publisher pseudonym)



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