



## Well Bred and Dead

By Catherine O'Connell  
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### Introduction

Pauline Cook is an elegant and beautiful widow in her forties whose fortune has diminished to the extent that she is forced to contemplate selling her penthouse, or worse, acquiring a second husband! When Pauline discovers the corpse of her dear friend Ethan Campbell, an apparent suicide, her own misfortunes appear trivial in comparison. That is, until no living relatives come forward to claim the writer's body and Pauline realizes it will fall to her to bear the costs of the funeral and memorial service. As the news of Ethan's death flies through Chicago's Gold Coast high society, Pauline must work overtime to keep the gossip hounds and ladies-who-lunch at bay. Puzzled by multiple birth certificates the police find in Ethan's apartment, as well as the tableau of his death—a man who spent his adult life chronicling the lives of society women does not shoot himself wearing a bourgeois ensemble of t-shirt and boxers—Pauline climbs off her high society roost to find out who the mysterious Ethan Campbell really was before his shady past puts Pauline and her bank account in

serious jeopardy!

### Questions for Discussion

1. Is Pauline a sympathetic character? Does she grow from her experiences? Is she a different person at the end of the book?
2. Is Ethan evil or a victim of his circumstances? Do you believe his story about the fate of the original Ethan Campbell?
3. On page 41, Pauline speaks about the aftermath of death. *When one is first confronted with death, the numbing shock basically gets one through the initial days. But it's the ensuing weeks and months and even years after the death that prove far more difficult, when the totality of the passing settles in. Death is in the times the phone doesn't ring, the day one doesn't have to seek out a birthday gift or send a postcard from abroad, the emptiness of unlocking the door to a lifeless home. The wasted thought, Henry/Mother/Grandmother, would love this place/dress/vase. This was where death affected me the most, in the staggering weight of the small details rather than the grand.* Do you agree? Have you felt similar emotions?
4. Why doesn't Terrance sleep with Pauline?
5. What do you think of Pauline's peer group? What does Pauline think of her peers? Do any of the characters remind you of someone you know?
6. Who do you see as the most honest character in the book? What do you think of Lord and Lady Grace? Did Lord G. get what he deserved?
7. Which does Pauline fear most, growing old or being penniless?
8. Do you think Pauline puts too much emphasis on manners in today's culture?
9. Why does Pauline honor Whitney's secret?
10. What do you think is going to happen to Pauline?

Author's note: Did anyone look up the definition of the Latin express used for the Chapter 37 heading, *Nemo me Impune Lacessit*? It's my favorite. No one harms me with impunity!

### About the Author

Catherine O'Connell lives in Aspen and is active with the Aspen Writers' Foundation. She has worked as a sales executive for the importers of Taittinger Champagne and Louis Jadot wines. She is a graduate of the University of Colorado School of Journalism.