

DEAD of AUTUMN

Book Club Questions

- Did the opening chapter make you want to read more?
- What motivates Alexa to act as an advocate for the dead girl in the woods?
- What role does the Women's Clinic play in Alexa's life?
- Alexa says that she is only looking for a casual relationship, so she continues to date Caleb, thinking he's on the same page. Why do you think she completely misread not only Caleb, but his view of their relationship?
- In Chapter 18, Caleb uses sex to punish Alexa for what he calls "her sin against God". Afterwards, Alexa tells herself that because the encounter began with her willing consent, she "couldn't call it rape". Do you think this sexual encounter between Caleb and Alexa was rape or rough sex? If you think it was rape, why do you think Alexa lied to herself?
- Alexa is a strong advocate for women's rights, but she doesn't always reflect that strength in her own actions. Do you view Alexa more as a strong, decisive woman or a passive victim? Why?
- By the end of the book, do you believe her experiences have transformed Alexa in any way? Describe any transformation.
- Reverend Browne is able to convince his congregation that his actions, even including murder, are carried out in the name of the Lord. Why do you think that people allow themselves to be convinced that an action or belief is right, even when it conflicts with the principles of their religion or their upbringing?
- In *Roe vs Wade*, the Supreme Court upheld a woman's right to choose abortion. Yet, more than 40 years later, the right to an abortion remains a divisive issue in America, both politically and culturally. The anti-abortion movement engages in activities ranging from simple protests to hectoring patients to criminal actions such as assault, arson and murder. The pro-choice movement is also very committed to their position. Why does this issue remain such a hot button for the United States?
- The Underground Railroad has played an important role in our national narrative of the Civil War. Do you believe that the Underground Railroad has been romanticized?
- Imagine hiding in that cave beneath Our Lady of the Forest with Confederate soldiers standing overhead. Although the episode in *Dead of Autumn* is fiction, there must have been many such close

calls for slaves riding the Underground Railroad to freedom. What characteristics could give a slave the strength to run for freedom?

- The parallel story about the Babes in the Woods is a fictionalized account of a real incident from the Depression. Why do you think Elmo Noakes killed his three daughters? What were his alternatives?
- Did you find any common themes in young Dewilla's tale and Alexa's modern-day story?
- What was your response to the ending?

Thanks for selecting DEAD of AUTUMN by Sherry Knowlton as your Book Club selection. You can look for upcoming Alexa Williams novels and sign up for my newsletter at www.sherryknowlton.com.

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