

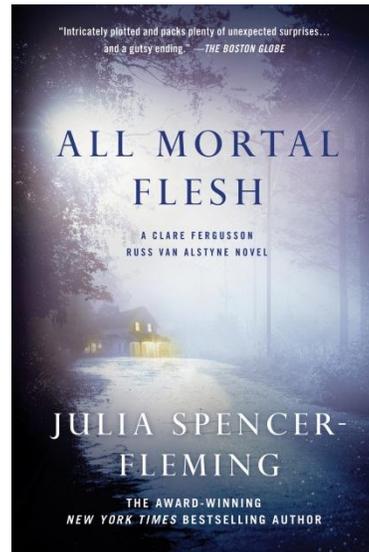
READING GROUP GUIDE

All Mortal Flesh

By Julia Spencer-Fleming

ISBN 13: 978-1-250-01855-7

ISBN 10: 1-250-01855-2



About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *All Mortal Flesh* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *All Mortal Flesh*.

About the Book

One horrible murder. Two people destined for love or tragedy. Emotions explode in the novel Julia Spencer-Fleming's readers have been clamoring for.

Police Chief Russ Van Alstyne's first encounter with Clare Fergusson was in the hospital emergency room on a freezing December night. A newborn infant had been abandoned on the town's Episcopal church steps. If Russ had known that the church had a new priest, he certainly would never have guessed that it would be a woman. Not a woman like Clare. That night in the hospital was the beginning of an attraction so fierce, so forbidden, that the only thing that could keep them safe from compromising their every belief was distance---but in a small town like Millers Kill, distance is hard to find.

Russ Van Alstyne figures his wife kicking him out of their house is nobody's business but his own. Until a neighbor pays a friendly visit to Linda Van Alstyne -and finds the woman's body, gruesomely butchered, on the kitchen floor. To the state police, it's an open-and-shut case of a disaffected husband, silencing first his wife, then the murder investigation he controls. To the townspeople, it's proof that the whispered gossip about the police chief and the priest was true.



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To the powers-that-be in the church hierarchy, it's a chance to control their wayward cleric once and for all.

About the Author

Julia Spencer-Fleming is an Agatha, Anthony, Barry, Dilys, Gumshoe, Nero Wolfe and Macavity award winner. Her books have been shortlisted for the Edgar and RT Readers Choice awards. Julia lives in Maine with her husband and three children.

Discussion Questions

1. Imagine ALL MORTAL FLESH as the basis for a screenplay. Choose a scene and discuss how you, as the director, would want to film it.
2. Her relationship with Russ aside, is Clare as skilled at resolving her own inner conflicts as she is at dealing with those of others? Are there any relationships in particular that you think she mismanages? Why?
3. Conventional wisdom in present day society often suggests, in one form or another, that “there is more sorrow in not following your heart,” often paraphrased as “if it feels good, do it...” What do you think?
4. Do you think the life that Clare lives is appealing?
5. Why do you think the author entitled her book ALL MORTAL FLESH?
6. Do you have a favorite character - or one you love to hate - in the story [other than Clare and Russ]?
7. Did the book leave you wanting to learn more about any character? Who?
8. What do Aaron and Quinn have to say about the pitfalls of parenting in today's society? From the parental perspective, what steps might have succeeded in avoiding their fates?
9. What do Aaron and Quinn have to say about the pros and cons of being raised in a small town? Is our society's increased focus on huge schools and the internet resulting in a similar phenomenon of isolation and boredom in suburbs as well as cities? Think Columbine. Think the Dartmouth murders.
10. Does it take a village to properly raise a child? And if so, what happened here?



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11. What do you think of Russ, combat and law enforcement veteran (and grown man), seeking shelter, literally, with his mother in time of need? Does this ring true from a mother's perspective? From a mature man's perspective? What does this say about his emotional maturity level? Would you choose a similar path in time of emotional need?
12. What are the defining events in Clare and Russ's lives, or have they not occurred yet?
13. What do you think of the role of Deacon Elizabeth? Of her personally? Does she ring true as a character? A human being?
14. The primary murderous act in *ALL MORTAL FLESH* is, ultimately, a purely random act of violence, the effects of which alter so many lives irrevocably. What does this say about the randomness of violence in American society? Is it a comment on a society that differs markedly, in its level of murder rates, from most other societies in this world? If so, how?
15. Was the ending largely fated to happen, or could Linda, Russ, or Clare have taken steps that might have prevented their respective catastrophes? If so, what? When?

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