

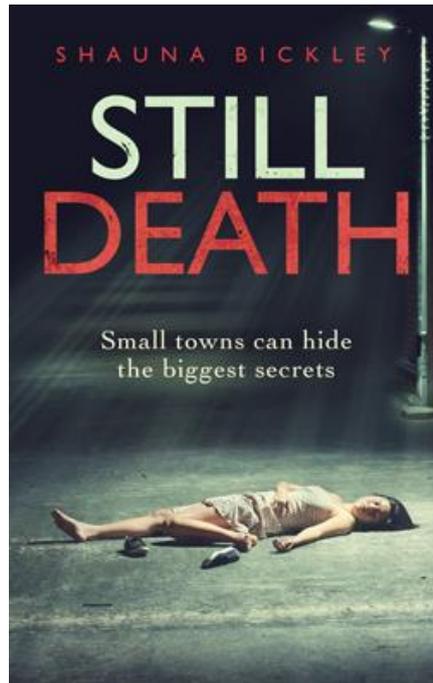
Still Death – Reading Club Notes

Spoiler Alert

Please note these questions and notes **DO** contain spoilers.

It is recommended you don't read these notes until you have read the book as it will spoil the gradual unfolding of the plot.

Summary



The first was a hit and run.

The second a murder/suicide.

Who will be next?

Lexie has recently moved to Nettleford with her husband and children. After living in London, she thinks life in the small town will be boring. However, she meets Evelyn, an elderly neighbour, and gets pulled into the mystery of whether Evelyn's son Patrick killed his girlfriend in a hit and run.

Lexie comes to believe Patrick's story of being set-up, but she is the only person who does. Other *accidents* occur, too many to be a coincidence, and they all appear linked to the death of Patrick's girlfriend.

Lexie is determined to find out who is behind it, until her family is threatened and then become part of the statistics.

Death lurks in the quietest places.

Discussion Points

1. At the beginning of the novel, Lexie is getting used to the small town and being a full-time mum after having had a busy job. How do these situations affect her? Lexie worries about whether she loves her children. Is this a realistic worry?
2. In London, Lexie earns more than Nathan. This changes after she is made redundant and they move to Nettleford. When Nathan's birthday approaches, Lexie feels uncomfortable about buying him a present with *his* money. In what other ways does redundancy and changing roles affect relationships?
3. Miriam has reasons for wanting to home school Grace that have nothing to do with the education system. What do you see as the positive and negative points of home schooling children?
4. Lexie discovers quite a lot about Dominique Santos, Miriam, Patrick and Veronica from internet searches. Through this and social media, our lives are more open now than ever. Is this good or bad, or just something we need to recognise? What steps should we take about how much of our lives are open to public scrutiny?
5. Lexie agrees not to tell anyone that she has seen Patrick at Evelyn's house. While she isn't happy about that decision, she does it because Evelyn is dying. Later, she copies files from Peter Webber's laptop. Is doing something illegal ever justified?

6. Lexie isn't sure whether or not she believes Patrick's story. Ultimately she feels he is an *honest* person even if his story is outrageous. Is this a realistic reaction on her part to believe the person rather than the story?
7. Lexie is shocked when Jean tells her about the police operation she took part in. How does this revelation impact Lexie and her view of her mother? Are we sometimes guilty of assuming an older person *knows nothing* or *has never done anything*?
8. Was Lexie right in satisfying her curiosity about Miriam? The outcome could have been very different. If you were Miriam, would you have made the decisions she did?
9. After the events at Miriam's house, Veronica doesn't appear again in the novel. Do you think that experience will have changed her?
10. Towards the end of the novel, Dominique says, 'It always had to be this way.' Is that right, was the ending inevitable? What alternative could there be?

Author Details

Shauna Bickley works as a technical writer, and also develops workshops and training courses for corporate organisations.

She writes short stories and novels. Her short stories have been published in magazines, and *Recipe for a Dinner Party* was selected for the Awesome Indies anthology, *Awesome Allshorts: Last Days, Lost Ways*.

Her novels include:

Still Death – mystery/thriller

Lies of the Dead - mystery/thriller

Lives Interrupted - contemporary women's fiction

Driftwood - romantic suspense

Shauna was born in England and has lived in various countries around the world as her husband was in the military. She now calls Auckland home.

Interview Q&A

Q. What is the greatest joy of writing for you?

A. When someone writes or tells me how much they enjoyed one of my books, how they were drawn to the characters and the emotion of the story, or that they couldn't turn the pages fast enough but didn't want to miss a word. That's magic!

I love losing myself in a wonderful story and I've always wanted to be able to create that for other people. It means so much to me when someone tells me I've succeeded.

Q. Who are your favorite authors?

A. That is such a difficult question to answer.

I try to read widely and look at different styles as well as different genres. Since I've been writing seriously I've found that I read differently and am constantly looking at why something works (or doesn't).

I enjoy mystery/suspense novels, but also writing that makes me laugh. I'm in awe of writers who make me laugh out loud.

Q. When you're not writing, how do you spend your time?

A. As I live close to the beach that plays quite a big part in my spare time. I find walking a great way to inspire ideas for scenes in current and future projects.

I guess I'm not that much different to many other people in that meeting friends (especially in cafes and restaurants) is a favourite way to spend time, and when work and cash allows then travel is on the list.

Q. What is your writing process?

People talk about being a planner or a pantsier (writing by the seat of your pants not knowing where the story is going). I tend to think of it as more of a continuum rather than being one or the other.

My books are character rather than plot driven, and generally start in a similar way. A character comes to mind and over a period of weeks or months they take shape as I find out more about them and their situation. At some point I start to plan in general terms, usually a paragraph or so of the main plot points for the first half of the novel. I also note down any particular background, habits or quirks for the main characters that I feel are important.

By that time, I'm eager to start writing. I've usually worked out my opening scenes and so those first few thousand words come quickly. Once I reach the half-way point (up to where I've plotted) I usually know the main points for the rest, and finish sketching out my plan, together with any changes that have happened on the way.