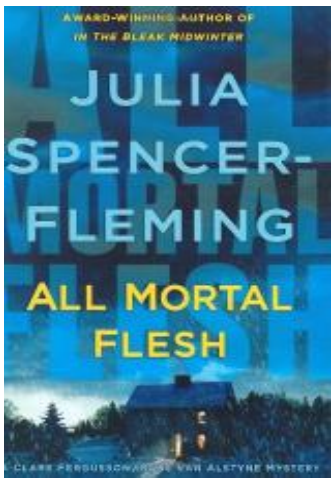
# All Mortal Flesh: A Clare Fergusson and Russ Van Alstyne Mystery

by Julia Spencer-Fleming




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

*Obsession. Lies. Nothing is as it seems in Millers Kill, where betrayal twists old friendships and evil waits inside quaint white clapboard farmhouses.*

## Discussion Guide

**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, ?there is more sorrow in not following your heart.? Often paraphrased as ?if it feels good, do it?? What do you think?

**3.** Do you think the life that Clare lives is appealing?

**4.** Why do you think the author entitled her book **All Mortal Flesh**?

**5.** Do you have a favorite character - or one you love to hate - in the story [other than Clare and Russ]?

**6.** Did the book leave you wanting to learn more about any character? Who?

**7.** What do Aaron and Quinn have to say about the pitfalls of parenting in today?s society? As a parent, what steps might have succeeded in avoiding their fates?

**8.** What do Aaron and Quinn have to say about the pro?s and con?s 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 and cities as well? Think Columbine. Think the Dartmouth murders.

**9.** Does it take a village to properly raise a child? And if so, what happened here?

**10.** What do you think of combat and law enforcement veteran, and grown man, Russ 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?

**11.** What are the defining events in Clare and Russ?s lives? Or have they occurred yet?

**12.** What do you think of the role of Deacon Elizabeth? Of her personally? Does she ring true as a character? A human being?

**13.** The primary murderous act in **All Mortal Flesh** is, ultimately, a purely random act of violence. Yet, the ripples affect so many lives irrevocably. What does this say about the randomness of violence in American society, and the message in a society that differs markedly, in its level of murder rates, from most other societies in this world.

**14.** Was the ending largely fated to happen, or could Linda, Russ or Clare have taken steps that might have avoided their respective catastrophes? If so, what? When?

## Author Bio

Julia Spencer-Fleming is the *New York Times* bestselling author of ONE WAS A SOLDIER, and an Agatha, Anthony, Dilys, Barry, Macavity and Gumshoe Award winner. She studied acting and history at Ithaca College and received her J.D. at the University of Maine School of Law. Her books have been shortlisted for the Edgar, Nero Wolfe and *Romantic Times* RC awards. Julia lives in a 190-year-old farmhouse in southern Maine.

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