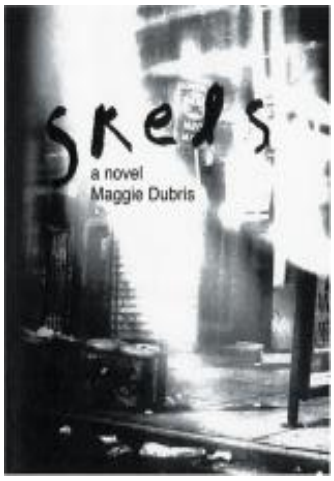
Skels

by Maggie Dubris



About the Book

Lyrical, violent, and vibrantly drawn, **Skels** is a portrait of the urban underworld from a paramedic's point of view. The story is based on an unusual idea: What would happen if the ambulance world was permeated with the works of past authors, and the homeless patients (the "skels") carried the consciousness of the writers? What would a paramedic do if she met a great poet, dirty and covered with lice, and was granted the chance to save him - not from dying but from his own life? A funny, gritty urban thriller, **Skels** pits corrupt cops, acid tripping holographers, drunken ambulance drivers and punk rock drag queens against this surreal literary environment, portraying a New York City of 1979 rich with an ancient truth that is all but invisible from the outside.

Maggie Dubris worked full time as a 911 medic in New York City for almost 20 years. Drawing on these experiences, she connects the poetry and intensity found in the works of Jack London, Walt Whitman, Rimbaud, and Mark Twain to the CBGB and Maxwell's Kansas City scene and the harrowing stories of NY's poorest poor. In **Skels**, Dubris shares what she saw: the magic and humor of haunted world that survives to this day inside our own.

Discussion Guide

1. The author has stated, "When I wrote **Skels**, I was thinking about what would happen if the ambulance world was permeated with the works of past writers, and the skels were carrying the consciousnesses of the writers themselves." How does idea this play out in the book? Do you see specific writers in specific characters? If so, which ones?

2. How does humor function in the book? In your opinion does it function to enhance or detract from the book's social commentary and literary themes?

3. How is a sense of place transmitted in **Skels**? How much of a sense of magic or disorientation do you feel Dubris intentionally creates and how much do you see as endemic to the city and time period? What was going on socially and

economically at the national level in 1979 and how, if at all, do larger social and economic forces shape the characters and plot?

4. How does holographer's billboard expand on the idea of 'poetry' in daily life?

5. Who do you think is the most decent or admirable person in the book? The least admirable? Does the world the characters inhabit change your standards for judging them?

6. Compare and contrast the use of rural and urban images and landscapes. In **Skels**, does the country appear at times inside the city, and vice versa? If so, what function does this serve in relation to the plot and theme?

7. What do you think really happened that night on the pier when Morgan's partner shot himself? Do find this a "reason" that explains Morgan's behavior? Or do you think his nature was this way to begin with? What other characters in literature had a similar nature?

Author Bio

Maggie Dubris was born in Georgia and moved to New York when she was seventeen to become a poet. She is the author of two books: **WillieWorld** (CuzEditions 1998) and **Weep Not, My Wanton** (Black Sparrow Press 2002). She has played, sand and written lyrics for several bands, including Kill All Your Darlings, Lulu Revue, and Homer Erotic. A former NYC 911 paramedic working at St. Clare's Hospital, Maggie Dubris is now employed as a professional hypnotist.

Critical Praise

"Dubris captures that hurried sense of absurdity that other authors, like Denis Johnson, have tackled in the emergency room-trauma story genre. And like Johnson, Dubris harnesses a dry, sick sense of humor... **Skels** conveys the overwhelming feelings one has during epic moments of tragedy."

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