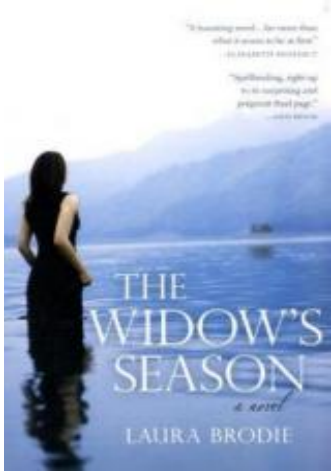
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The Widow's Season

by Laura Brodie



About the Book

A lyrical, mysterious novel about a young, seemingly haunted, widow, inspired by Renaissance plays where husbands faked their deaths in order to spy on their wives.

Discussion Guide

1. What are some of the meanings behind the novel?s title? Why do you think the author chose it, and how does the plot follow the holiday seasons?

2. At one point Sarah wonders ?What could be extraordinary in the life of a woman like her?? Why does she think her life is so mundane, and what is ironic about her question?

3. Sarah feels angry and frustrated about many of the things in her life?the downfall of her marriage, her inability to carry a child to term, David?s disappearance. How does she finally find peace with herself?

4. This novel stemmed from the author?s graduate dissertation on widows in English literature-in particular, a chapter where ?dead? husbands, (either ghosts or men who fake their deaths), watch their wives. Take a look at the novel?s epigraph, which comes from that study. Do you think that today?s widows still feel that their husbands are watching them? Does society encourage them to keep their husbands present in their lives?

5. What are some of the underlying reasons that Sarah and Nate have the affair? What do they gain from the relationship? Why do you think Margaret encourages it?

6. Sarah is mourning more than just the loss of David when he disappears. Explore why she is in such a dark place in her life. Can she pinpoint when it happened and why?

7. After learning that David survives the storm on the river, and hearing his explanations for his actions, do you think his ?hiding out? was a selfish act or a reasonable option?

8. Why do you believe the author tells the story both from Sarah?s and David?s points of view?

9. Sarah thinks to herself, ?Age...does not appear first in wrinkles or gray hair, but in the dulling of one?s smile.? How does this sum up the life she was living with David before his disappearance?

10. Why do you think David is so real to Sarah? Why does she need him to be?

Author Bio

Laura Brodie was born in Columbus, Ohio, raised in Raleigh, North Carolina, and educated at Harvard and the University of Virginia. Her first book, **Breaking Out: VMI and the Coming of Women** (Pantheon/Vintage 2000), covered the transition to coeducation at America?s last all-male military college. It was featured in *The Washington Post* and on NPR?s Diane Rehm Show. Her debut novel, **The Widow?s Season**, grew out of a dissertation chapter on husbands in 17th century drama who fake their deaths in order to spy on their wives. **The Widow?s Season** won the Faulkner-Wisdom prize for Best Novel-in-Progress. Brodie?s mother-daughter memoir, called **Love in a Time of Homeschooling**, will be published by HarperCollins in April 2010, and describes one year when she pulled her 10-year-old daughter from the public schools in order to share a special time for learning. Brodie teaches at Washington and Lee University, and lives in Lexington, VA with her husband and three daughters.

Critical Praise

"Brodie draws on literary traditions, but hides the academic stuff under the flow of smart dialogue and sharp detail. This is a work of craft and imagination."

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