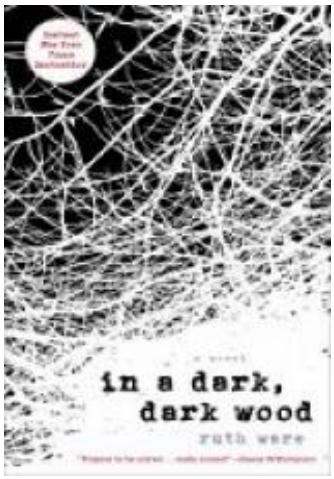
In a Dark, Dark Wood

by Ruth Ware



About the Book

What should be a cozy and fun-filled weekend deep in the English countryside takes a sinister turn in Ruth Ware?s suspenseful, compulsive and darkly twisted psychological thriller.

Sometimes the only thing to fear?is yourself.

When reclusive writer Leonora is invited to the English countryside for a weekend away, she reluctantly agrees to make the trip. But as the first night falls, revelations unfold among friends old and new, an unnerving memory shatters Leonora?s reserve, and a haunting realization creeps in: the party is not alone in the woods.

Discussion Guide

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Nora is a mystery writer who thrives on routine. As a novelist, she is in control of each book?s narrative; in her personal life, she takes utmost care to control her environment, her health, and her social life. Why is it so important for Nora to be in control? How is she stripped of that control throughout the novel? How does Nora respond as her mental state and her freedom become increasingly uncontrollable?

2. What techniques does the author use to increase the tension and suspense throughout the novel? Discuss specific moments that were unnerving for you as a reader, and how the author kept you on edge. How did the author use humor to lighten the mood periodically?

3. The protagonist goes by Nora, Lee, Leo or Leonora, depending on to whom she is speaking. Even her novels are published under a different name: L. N. Shaw. What do Nora?s various past and present identities say about her personality and her motivations? Why is she so adamant that everyone at the hen party call her ?Nora?? Why does Lee

stutter, but Nora does not?

4. IN A DARK, DARK WOOD shifts between past and present. How did this shifting structure impact your reading of the novel and your perspective on the various characters? What is gained by switching back and forth between time periods?

5. How does the author foreshadow the harrowing events of Saturday night? Did you see the twists coming, or were you surprised by the novel?s outcome?

6. Why is running so important to Nora?s well-being and her mental state? Why does Nora always feel a need to escape, and what are her fears when she is not able to run?

7. How does the glass house become a character in the book? How does the author convey its remoteness, and how does the house itself take on an increasingly sinister quality over the course of the weekend? How does Flo?s story about the house?s construction and her aunt?s struggle with the villagers impact your perception of the house?

8. Describe Nora?s relationship with James. Is it reasonable to think that her feelings toward him would be what they are after a decade?

9. Why is Flo so extremely loyal to Clare? Is she simply a weak person looking to latch on to someone more confident and secure, or is there something else at play in their relationship? How are Nora and Flo?s relationships with Clare similar? Why does Clare act the way she does, especially toward Nora and Flo? What does Clare stand to gain by identifying herself with and buoying up people who are so different from her?

10. Did you find Nora to be a reliable narrator? Identify key moments where you trusted her, and key moments where you doubted her. What techniques does the author use to make Nora seem both reliable and unreliable at various points in the novel?

11. Many of the characters are actors, and there is a great deal of talk about various plays and shows --- Tom met Clare while working in the theater, and Nora and James first met when Clare fell ill and Nora, the understudy, took on Clare?s leading role. The glass house is referred to numerous times as a stage with an audience of trees beyond its windows. Why is all this talk of actors and performances so significant in the novel? Which characters perform the most, and why? Which performances did you see through, and which did you believe?

12. What do you think happens to the characters after the novel is over? How do you think the events of the weekend will impact each of them in their lives and relationships going forward?

Enhance Your Book Club

1. Plan a book club meeting that?s also a hen night! Keep things light and festive (unlike the hen party in the book) with fun cocktails and games like ?Never Have I Ever.?

2. If you?re not too superstitious (and if the scene in the book didn?t scare you for good), break out your Ouija board and ask some questions about the members of your book club.

3. Bring a copy of your favorite scary story and read it aloud to the group (bonus points if you read it in the dark!).

Author Bio

Ruth Ware worked as a waitress, a bookseller, a teacher of English as a foreign language, and a press officer before settling down as a full-time writer. She now lives with her family in Sussex, on the south coast of England. She is the #1 *New York Times* and *Globe and Mail* bestselling author of IN A DARK, DARK WOOD; THE WOMAN IN CABIN 10; THE LYING GAME; THE DEATH OF MRS. WESTAWAY; THE TURN OF THE KEY; ONE BY ONE; THE IT GIRL; ZERO DAYS; ONE PERFECT COUPLE; and THE WOMAN IN SUITE 11.

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