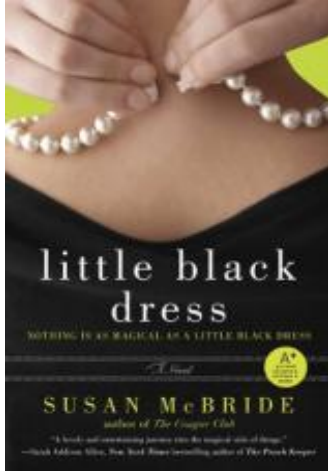


# Little Black Dress

by Susan McBride

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## About the Book

Two sisters whose lives seemed forever intertwined are torn apart when a magical little black dress gives each one a glimpse of an unavoidable future. Antonia Ashton has worked hard to build a thriving career and a committed relationship, but she realizes her life has gone off track. Forced to return home to Blue Hills when her mother, Evie, suffers a massive stroke, Toni finds the old Victorian where she grew up as crammed full of secrets as it is with clutter. Now she must put her mother's house in order --- and uncover long-buried truths about Evie and her aunt, Anna, who vanished fifty years earlier on the eve of her wedding. By shedding light on the past, Toni illuminates her own mistakes and learns the most unexpected things about love, magic, and a little black dress with the power to break hearts... and mend them.

## Discussion Guide

1. How are sisters Evie and Anna different? Are they alike in any way?
2. Do you see a parallel between the sisters' difficult relationship and Toni's relationship with Evie? Is it a case of history repeating itself i.e., Evie's relationship with Anna, or something else?
3. Anna was instantly drawn into the Gypsy's shop while Evie wanted nothing to do with it. While Anna seemed mesmerized by the tale of the black dress and easily accepted that it was magical, Evie thought her foolish. What makes Anna so reckless and Evie so cautious?
4. Toni is as wary of the dress as Evie. Does she handle glimpsing her fate any better than Evie or Anna?

5. Once Evie had experienced the power of the dress, did it help her to understand why Anna left? Or did it further confuse her?
6. Toni resisted going back to Blue Hills because she felt like her past was behind her; instead she discovered that so much of who she is relates to her own history and that of her family. Did she have to leave home to find herself? Or did Toni truly discover who she is once she returned to Blue Hills?
7. When Anna walks into the river with the baby, Evie wishes her gone and can't imagine ever forgiving her. Do you think Anna's punishment was enough or too much? Why does it take so long for Evie to forgive? Do you think what Anna did was unforgivable?
8. Is there any one thing that makes Toni realize she isn't in love with Greg, or is it a case of absence giving her clarity rather than making the heart grow fonder?
9. What is the significance of Toni taking part in the ice harvest?
10. The novel is full of water imagery as water is a life-giver but also has the power to take lives. How does this imagery symbolize what each main character goes through? For example, Evie's sense of treading water while she's in a coma..
11. Should Anna and Evie have told Toni the truth about her birth? Was Anna right to want to keep it a secret for the time being? Is there ever a case when keeping secrets is less damaging than telling the truth?
12. Do you have a personal belonging that holds some "magic" for you? Does it make you feel better, happier, or more secure?

## Author Bio

Susan McBride is the author of *LITTLE BLACK DRESS* and *THE COUGAR CLUB*, selected by Target Stores as a Bookmarked Breakout Title and named a Midwest Connections Pick by the Midwest Booksellers Association. *THE COUGAR CLUB* also made *More Magazine's* list of "February Books We're Buzzing About." Foreign editions of *THE COUGAR CLUB* will be published in France, Turkey, and Croatia. After *LITTLE BLACK DRESS*, Susan will pen another women's fiction novel for HarperCollins and a young adult thriller for Random House (details to come!).

On the personal front, Susan calls herself an "Accidental Cougar" after meeting a younger man in 2005 when she was a *St. Louis Magazine* Top Single. They were married in February 2008 and live happily ever after in a suburb of St. Louis. Susan is a breast cancer survivor and often speaks to women's groups about her experience.

Additionally, Susan McBride has written five award-winning *Debutante Dropout Mysteries* (HarperCollins/Avon), including BLUE BLOOD, THE GOOD GIRL'S GUIDE TO MURDER, THE LONE STAR LONELY HEARTS CLUB, NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, and TOO PRETTY TO DIE. She has authored several YA series books for Random House about debutantes in Houston, the debut in 2008 appropriately titled *THE DEBS*, which was followed by LOVE, LIES, AND TEXAS DIPS, in 2009. GLOVES OFF will be the third book.

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