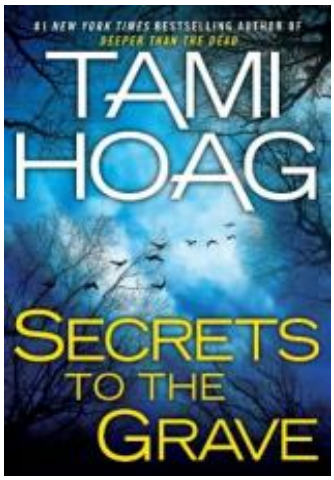
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Secrets to the Grave

by Tami Hoag



About the Book

Marissa Fordham had a past full of secrets, a present full of lies. Everyone knew of her, but no one knew her.

When Marissa is found brutally murdered, with her young daughter, Haley, resting her head on her mother?s bloody breast, she sends the idyllic California town of Oak Knoll into a tailspin. Already on edge with the upcoming trial of the See-No-Evil killer, residents are shocked by reports of the crime scene, which might not have been discovered for days had it not been for a chilling 911 call: a small child?s voice saying, ?My daddy hurt my mommy.?

Sheriff?s detective Tony Mendez faces a puzzle with nothing but pieces that won?t fit. To assist with his witness, Haley, he calls teacher-turned-child advocate Anne Leone. Anne?s life is hectic enough --- she?s a newlywed and a part-time student in child psychology, and she?s the star witness in the See-No-Evil trial. But one look at Haley, alone and terrified, and Anne?s heart is stolen.

As Tony and Anne begin to peel back the layers of Marissa Fordham?s life, they find a clue fragment here, another there. And just when it seems Marissa has taken her secrets to the grave, they uncover a fact that puts Anne and Haley directly in the sights of a killer: *Marissa Fordham never existed.*

Discussion Guide

1. Do you think Vince Leone and Anne Navarre are equal partners in their relationship? In what ways are they unequal, and how are these inequalities balanced? Do you foresee conflict in their future due to the varying lenses they use to view violent crime and the justice system? How are they affected by their age difference, previous romantic relationships, his bullet wound?

2. Discuss the relationship between Anne and Dennis Farman. How is Anne uniquely prepared to deal with Dennis?

Why does she continue to visit him? Does she succeed in getting through to him? Should a young man like Dennis ever be considered irredeemable?

3. If you were Anne, would you have taken in Haley? Why or why not? Do you think it was a good idea?

4. Tami is well known for creating unusual characters. Which character(s) in this book did you find most disturbing/frightening/intriguing? What are the similarities and differences between Dennis Farman?s and Marissa?s killer? If you have read **Deeper Than the Dead**, discuss how Peter Crane is similar or different.

5. Tragedy often is a catalyst for change. What future do you envision for Anne and Vince? What do you envision for Dennis, Wendy, and Haley? Are they young enough to overcome the traumas they've endured? If not, how might their scars play out?

6. Of all the secrets kept by the characters, which one do you think was most important to solving Marissa?s murder? Which one was the most damaging? What do you think the author is saying about what lies beneath the surface of ordinary people --- and the importance of protecting one's image? Have you experienced anything similar in your own world?

7. Does Milo Bordain have the capacity to love others, or does she only manipulate them? What are her true feelings for her husband, son, and Hayley?

8. Was Marissa right to lie about the identity of Haley?s father? What would you have done in her circumstances?

9. When Zander Zahn was suspected of Marissa?s murder, did you believe he could be guilty? What aspects of his personality led you to your conclusion?

10. Were there any characters you thought were too good or bad to be true? If so, would making them more ordinary increase or decrease the effectiveness of the story?

11. In **Deeper Than the Dead** and **Secrets to the Grave** we see Oak Knoll as a town of contrasts. Discuss the best and worst aspects of Oak Knoll. What role has it played in the shocking events of these two books? If it were a real place, would you want to live there?

Author Bio

Tami Hoag is the #1 international bestselling author of more than 30 books. There are more than 40 million copies of her books in print in more than 30 languages. Renowned for combining thrilling plots with character-driven suspense, Hoag first hit the *New York Times* bestseller list with NIGHT SINS, and each of her books since has been a bestseller. She lives in California.

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