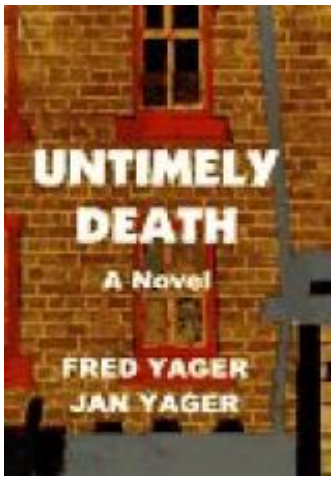
Untimely Death

by Fred Yager and Jan Yager



About the Book

A vicious killer sets out to silence anyone who might know the secret behind the untimely death of an attractive criminology professor, whose nude body is found by her best friend and co-worker, Professor Kimberly Stone. Driven to find her best friend's killer, Kimberly joins forces with a reluctant homicide detective as they scour Manhattan's underground night life, following the trail of a tortured soul, who may have chosen Kimberly as the next target.

Discussion Guide

1. Describe the role of secrecy in the novel. How is it a factor in Joan Walsh's murder? What is student Wayne Clark's secret? Does criminology professor Kimberly Stone have a secret? detective Alan Blake? Joan Walsh? Charlotte Katz? Bill Gardner? Richard Meyer? the housekeeper? How did secrecy shape the killer's formative years?

2. Untimely Death is, in part, the story of how a crime impacts on everyone touched by it: the murdered woman Joan Walsh, her best friend Kimberly Stone, Joan's boyfriend Bill Gardner, the boyfriend's young son, the investigating detective, the victim's parents, and the students and faculty where she worked. One critic (Danny Yee) wrote that the novel had "an unusual insight into grief." How did each of the characters deal with their grief following Joan Walsh's murder?

3. The critics are calling Untimely Death "a riveting thriller." How do the Yagers create suspense in their novel? What are the parts that were especially suspenseful to you?

4. The novel begins with Kimberly Stone getting flipped by Richie at her weekly self-defense class. Throughout the novel, Kimberly, "a theorist but not an activist," as the Associated Press wrote, evolves as she becomes more aggressive and active. What are some of the situations where she is passive? When is she more active and in charge? Dr. Stone goes from a professor who discusses the causes of crime to an amateur sleuth. How do you think participating in the actual

solution of a homicide will influence the way Dr. Stone will teach her criminology classes?

5. Friendship is another theme in Untimely Death. At the end of the book, the authors write about Kimberly Stone, "As she leaned back until her head pressed against his chest, she silently mourned the loss of one friend while letting herself feel the warmth and comfort of another." How did those words affect you? Where does this scene take place? Who is the other friend that Kimberly is referring to and is that relationship more than just friendship? How would you describe the friendship Kimberly had with Joan Walsh?

6. Why do you think the authors began the novel focusing on Kimberly Stone in her self-defense class rather than Joan Walsh's murder? How would switching those sections of the books have changed the emphasis or tone of the novel?

7. When did you guess the identity of the killer? Were you surprised? Were there any clues that you missed? One reviewer wrote, "?you solve this mystery by carefully matching the killer's thought patterns with the behavior of the characters in the book. I haven't seen this technique used before." What do you think he meant by that?

8. What does the title, Untimely Death, mean? How and when does that theme recur in the novel?

9. What themes, experiences, or emotions in your own life were invoke by the Yagers' novel? What character did you relate to the most, and why?

10. What ideas in Untimely Death do you find particularly absorbing or interesting? Why? What did you think of the artificial daisy in the victims' ears? What was the symbolism of the artificial daisy?

Author Bio

Fred Yager is a television executive and screenwriter. For 13 years, he was a reporter for the Associated Press, covering everything from robbery to murder as well as four years as entertainment writer and film critic. He majored in psychology at City University of New York and studied film at New York University School of Film. Fred also wrote for CBS News, CBS This Morning, as well as Fox News.

Critical Praise

"In their first novel, Untimely Death, husband-and-wife authors Fred and Jan Yager achieve the literary equivalent of a rookie who hammers a home-run in his first big-league at bat?The prose is smooth, with no puzzling moments to bedevil the reader?The Yagers have written a winner."

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