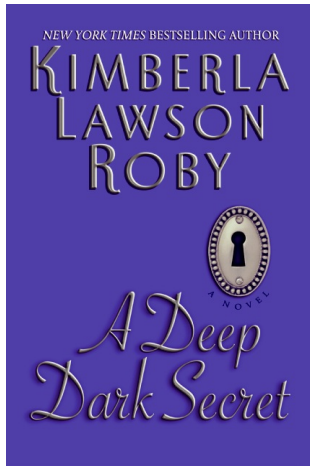




A Deep Dark Secret

By Kimberla Lawson Roby
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Introduction

In *A Deep Dark Secret*, renowned author Kimberla Lawson Roby explores the innermost thoughts of a young girl who is experiencing something no child should. It's something so shocking, so traumatic, that she dares not tell anyone, especially members of her own family. But what happens to twelve-year-old Jillian Maxwell also happens to thousands of boys and girls in this country. Brave, groundbreaking, and ultimately hopeful, this story illuminates a very serious issue that is all too common in our society today.

Questions for Discussion

1. Were you surprised that a man such as Byron (an upstanding and beloved deacon of a church) would even consider abusing his own stepdaughter or any child for that matter? Why or why not?
2. Do you believe Jillian is an example of most children who are sexually abused in terms of not having enough courage to tell? Why do you think this is the case?
3. Why do you think Jillian's mother never realized what was going on? Then, even though she didn't, how much responsibility does she bear?
4. Why do you think Jillian found it difficult to kiss Kyle? Do you think she will eventually be able to overcome her fear of intimacy?
5. Why do you believe Jillian and Nikki reacted so differently when it came to boys, even though they were best friends and had more in common than they realized?
6. If given the chance and a few more years had passed, do you believe Byron's "attention" would have eventually turned to little Layla? If so, what do you think Jillian would have done? Would she then have told her mother?
7. As you continued reading *A Deep Dark Secret*, what outcome were you hoping for?
8. If you learned today that someone had sexually abused the child of one of your relatives or the child of one of your close friends, what actions would you take? How would you react if it was your own son or daughter?
9. Do you know of any real-life childhood sexual abuse situations, those that involved family members or close friends? If so, what was done about it?
10. What do you think each of us can do to help prevent this sort of thing from happening to any child?

About the Author

Kimberla Lawson Roby is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the acclaimed novels *The Best of Everything*, *One in a Million*, *Sin No More*, *Love and Lies*, *Changing Faces*, *The Best-Kept Secret*, *Too Much of a Good Thing*, *A Taste of Reality*, *Behind Closed Doors*, *Here and Now*, *Casting the First Stone*, and *It's a Thin Line*. She lives with her husband in Illinois.