



★ **The Southern Book Club's Guide to Slaying Vampires**

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Buried beneath *The Southern Book Club's Guide to Slaying Vampires's* mounds of Southern-style humor and horrific plot twists ripples a coming-of-age story featuring the least likely of heroines.

When real, imagined, and metaphorical draculas conspire to drain the blood and spirits from society's most disenfranchised members, an aimless book club's hodgepodge of housewives and mothers are slapped out of their irrelevance by an impossible choice: they can either sacrifice their unwavering devotions to the roles assigned to them, or betray their moral imperatives, which are incompatible with those roles.

The Club's story is led by Patricia, whose claims to fame consist of being a wife, mother, and one of the Club's five founding members. She is a storyteller extraordinaire, her imagination vivid and her humility and empathy strong. Through her eyes: garbage cans live on the scary side of the house; and intolerably hot winds scream off the harbor, while the colder ones thrash trees, "their branches waving like lunatic arms."

The novel exudes sufficient Southern charm and hospitality to conceal the extensive groundwork laid for the delectable surprises that are made to spring from its passages. A vampire's hunger for blood may be insatiable, but this masterpiece novel ladles out ample thrills, chills, and relevant examples of sociopolitical injustices to satisfy any literary appetite. Whether fueled by an imminent crisis or relief from the last one, no scrap of the book's dialogue or prose is wasted; each line generates the precise mood or degree of tension that's best suited to launch the next shock.

The Southern Book Club's Guide to Slaying Vampires is sprinkled with blood, guts, and credibility. Beyond its tragicomic entertainment lies a magnificent tribute to housewives, mothers, and the magical powers wielded by those rare works of fiction that succeed in revealing truths inaccessible elsewhere.

LINDA THORLAKSON (March / April 2020)

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