



Draw the Dark
By Ilsa J. Bick
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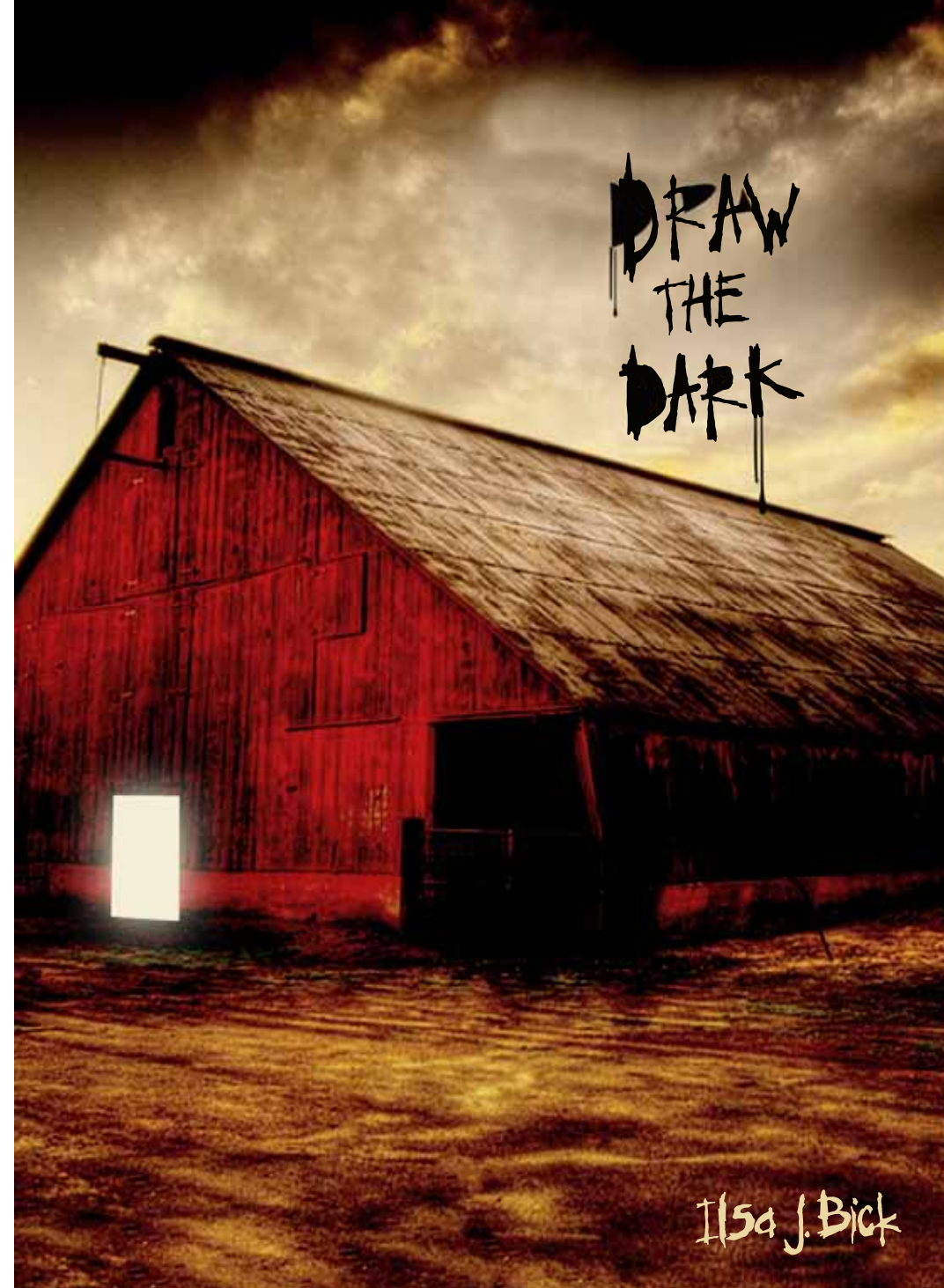
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Discussion Guide



There are things the people of Winter, Wisconsin, would rather forget.

They'd rather forget the year the Nazis came to town. They'd rather forget the murder and the fire. And they'd really rather forget Christian Cage.

Seventeen-year-old Christian's parents disappeared when he was a little boy, and ever since he's drawn and painted obsessively, trying desperately to remember his mother. The problem is Christian doesn't just draw his own memories. He can draw the thoughts of those around him. Confronted with fears and nightmares they'd rather forget, people have a bad habit of dying. So it's no surprise that Christian isn't exactly popular.

Yes, Winter, Wisconsin, would like to forget a few things. Ugly things. Evil things. Dark things. But as long as Christian Cage has paper and brushes, Winter won't be able to forget the truth. No matter how hard it tries.



About the Author:

Ilsa J. Bick is a child psychiatrist, as well as a film scholar, surgeon wannabe, former Air Force major, and an award-winning author of short stories, e-books and novels. She has also written for several long-running sci-fi series, and her original stories have been featured in numerous anthologies, magazines and online venues. Ilsa currently lives with her family and several furry creatures in rural Wisconsin, near a Hebrew cemetery. One thing she loves about the neighbors: they're very quiet and only come around for sugar once in a blue moon. Follow her blog at www.ilsajbick.com.

Topics for discussion:

1. Why is drawing so therapeutic for Christian? Discuss his drawing process, how drawing affects him emotionally, and where his artistic inspirations come from.
2. Discuss some of Christian's visions. What triggers these episodes and how does Christian react?
3. Author Ilsa Bick makes many references to eyes throughout *Draw the Dark*. What is the significance of eyes in the novel and what impact does this have on Christian?
4. Describe Christian's relationship with Dr. Rainier. Why do you think he is able to open up to her when he has such a hard time communicating with other people in his life.
5. How does Sarah help Christian? Discuss their relationship and what it means to Christian.
6. Why was Christian initially drawn to Mr. Witek in the nursing home? Discuss some of the clues that Christian was able to gather through his connection to Mr. Witek and how they helped Christian piece together his visions.
7. When Christian discovers that the United States housed German prisoners-of-war, Dr. Rainier remarks on the distinction between "PWs" and "POWs." What do you think she means by this? During a time of war, how do you imagine people would've felt to discover enemy prisoners residing in their towns? Do you think it would've made a difference if the majority of the townspeople were of German descent?
8. Why do you think all of Winter's Jewish citizens leave the town? What prompted David Witek to return? What do you think it would've been like to be Jewish in a town that welcomed German soldiers and allowed them to work alongside the townspeople?
9. Discuss the symbolism and significance of crows in the novel. Why do they seem to follow Christian wherever he goes?
10. Christian says he is "too scared to be in this world and too frightened to leave it." What do you think he means by this?
11. Why do you think the entire town of Winter tried to forget about the Nazis? Why is it so important for Christian to uncover the truth and how does this help him with the difficulties he has been facing in his own life?
12. Discuss the Halloween party at Sarah's house. What do you think caused Karl Dekker to snap and how did Christian react to the situation? What do you believe happened to Karl in the woods?
13. Discuss the importance of light throughout the story. How does light effect Christian in both negative and positive ways?
14. How do all of Christian's visions and his research come together to reveal the mystery behind Winter's history? How does this give Christian closure?
15. What gave Christian the courage to finally draw the handle on the door in his bedroom? What do you believe Christian experienced when he finally opened the door?