

THICKER THAN BLOOD

by

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Claire is a very interesting person. She is a ticking time bomb, doing a slow burn on a very long fuse. Her boyfriend is Tucker but she prefers Matthew, Lydia's boyfriend.

Lydia Colmar and Claire Optin were best friends in school. Fifty years later what could be so urgent that Lydia would risk her home and business, travel across country to confront Claire? After all that time what could have gone so terribly wrong?

Lydia has reason. Claire took everything Lydia had or wanted; her husband Matthew, her marriage, home and identity. Claire had a child, claimed it was Matthew's, a child born of lust and greed, of betrayal and manipulation. Lydia must stop Claire even if it's the last thing she'll ever do. Little does she know that it very well may be her last act.

Tucker Spence brings Lydia and Claire together. What he finds is a surprise, an unexpected and genuine love that he thought impossible. Reacquainted with Lydia, the years roll away, back through the decades that separated them. What is revealed is that they loved each other even then and more so now. With surprise, delight and the threat of Claire around every corner, Tucker and Lydia fight for a last chance to love each other and

to build a life together - a life that will be more impossible now than all those years ago. Still they try.

There's just one problem; Claire will again lay claim to all that Lydia owns with the intent of a more permanent solution. Claire does not realize that Ivy, the daughter whom she left with Matthew to raise, followed Lydia to California.

No longer a sickly and lonely dejected child, Ivy has grown into a bitter woman. Face to face with the mother that abandoned her, Ivy sets out to destroy Claire. She crosses the line from unstable to unstoppable. When Claire's schemes become apparent, Ivy has murder on her mind and will not be distracted.

All of these elements weave a story that is on a path of emotional destruction that explodes into a metaphorical pot that's ready to boil over. The final confrontation is explosive, the resulting aftermath tragic. Ivy is the only survivor.

Claire kills Lydia, takes her place in marriage to Tucker. Left with only one desperate alternative, Tucker kills Claire and himself.

The plot weaves tendrils in and around a common thread that goes to the very heart and soul of a psychological drama; a mounting certainty that each character will get to a point of no return, a place where they must ask how far is too far, and still will go past it. The results are horrifying, that people would go so far to satisfy that which gnaws at their soul and keeps them from finding peace or solace. It's a portrait of characters that are the essence of despair, disenfranchisement, determination, and the pursuit of retribution.

From Center City Philadelphia and the beautiful surrounding areas to the rugged cliffs of Malibu, California, from the nineteen seventies, a licentious era of drugs, sex and rock n'roll, to a future that is not only plausible but probable, **Thicker Than Blood** explores the darker side of human nature in stark contrast to the purity of elementary emotions that we all perceive as universal.

Love, jealousy, greed, revenge, devotion, loyalty, anger, frustration. All of these emotions reveal characters that dare to be so very human in their frailties, that tempt disaster and risk everything for the sake of personal dreams.

Whose story is this? It belongs equally to Lydia, Claire, Tucker and Ivy. It's Lydia's story in that she develops a place for love late in her life while at the same time fighting for her rightful place in the world, free of duplicity. She changes in the end in that she gains the strength to demand an end to the lies that have affected her since high school. It's Claire's story really, because she is the study of a psychological trauma so great that it ripples through decades and generations. It's Tucker's story in that he is the catalyst that winds all of the threads together. Tucker is the surprise; he doesn't want the complications yet needs the complications. He doesn't want to act yet it is Tucker that resolves the final conflict. It is Ivy's story as well and perhaps most importantly; she is the innocent victim of the sins of the parents and becomes the disease that is universal in all of our lives. The nurture and nature of how we

fit into the patterns that shaped our early lives will inevitably shape the adults we become. It is Ivy that suffered the worst and Ivy that becomes the strongest, the only survivor in a horrific tale that is all too possible and all too shocking to imagine. And yet, it is compelling enough to see how it could actually happen.

This started out as a story about best friends. The flip side of best friendship, the kind we've all seen and we've all experienced at one time or another. But the fact remains that the answer to the question of whose story this is, is really, it belongs to all of us. All of us in a universal sense, have aided and abetted the desire to be like those we admire while rejecting those who are just a little too close to the darker side within all of us. This story can be the story of anyone and everyone who has ever had a best friend that turned on them or a moment in our lives that flipped a switch from innocent to psychotic.

That line between indignation and murderous intent is so thin that the title of this story illustrates it best. It resounds with the fundamental philosophy of best friends and the depth of meaning it can have; Friends are not blood relatives and when push comes to shove, blood is always thicker than water. However, when a friend takes over or becomes the other that is when the meaning of the cliché, 'blood is thicker than water' goes further and begs we ask, what is Thicker Than Blood?