



Deep Dark Secret by Kimberla Lawson Roby

About the author:

New York Times bestselling author Kimberla Lawson Roby has published 12 novels, which include *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*, *It's a Thin Line*, *Casting the First Stone*, *Here and Now*, and her debut title, *Behind Closed Doors*, which was originally self-published through her own company, Lenox Press.

Her novels have frequented numerous bestseller lists, including those in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Essence* magazine, *Upscale* magazine, *Emerge Magazine*, *Barnes and Noble*, *Amazon.com*, *Wal-Mart*, *The Dallas Morning News*, and *The Austin Chronicle* to name a few. Both *Behind Closed Doors* and *Casting the First Stone* were no. 1 BlackBoard bestsellers for four consecutive months in both 1997 and 2000. *Behind Closed Doors* was the no. 1 BlackBoard bestselling book for paperback fiction in 1997.

In addition, Roby's first novel was nominated for BlackBoard's 1998 and 1999 Fiction Book of the Year Award, and she received the BlackBoard Fiction Book of the Year Award in 2001 for *Casting the First Stone*. She is also the 2006 and 2007 recipient of the Author of the Year—Female award presented by the African-American Literary Award Show in New York, the recipient of the 1998 First-Time Author Award from Chicago's Black History Month Book Fair and Conference, and her fifth novel, *A Taste of Reality*, was a 2004 finalist for the Atlanta Choice Awards sponsored by the *Atlanta Daily World*. Additionally, *Too Much of a Good Thing* received a 2004 Patron Choice Award from the Central Mississippi Regional Library System.

Source: HarperCollins Canada (<http://www.harpercollins.ca/>)

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About this book:

The *New York Times* bestselling author returns with the moving story of a family who learns to overcome betrayal and secrets with courage and love.

On the outside, twelve-year-old Jillian Maxwell is the perfect child. She's helpful with chores around the house, gets straight As in school, has plans for college, and stays out of trouble. She seems to have everything a girl could want: a big, beautiful new home, an adoring little sister, a mother who cares about her, and an attentive stepfather.

But inside, Jillian harbors a terrible secret.

Too frightened to tell, convinced that her friends and loved ones, especially her mother, won't understand—and worse, will blame her—Jillian endures her pain in silence, believing that things will get better. However, as time passes and her dilemma intensifies, the bright, hardworking girl becomes sullen and disinterested in her studies. Then, just when it seems she's on the verge of losing everything, Jillian discovers she has more strength than she ever imagined...and the power to change her fate.

With sensitivity and grace, Kimberla Lawson Roby addresses a very real and serious issue, while delivering the inspiring tale of one family's mission to shed light into the darkest corner of their lives.

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Discussion Questions:

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?

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