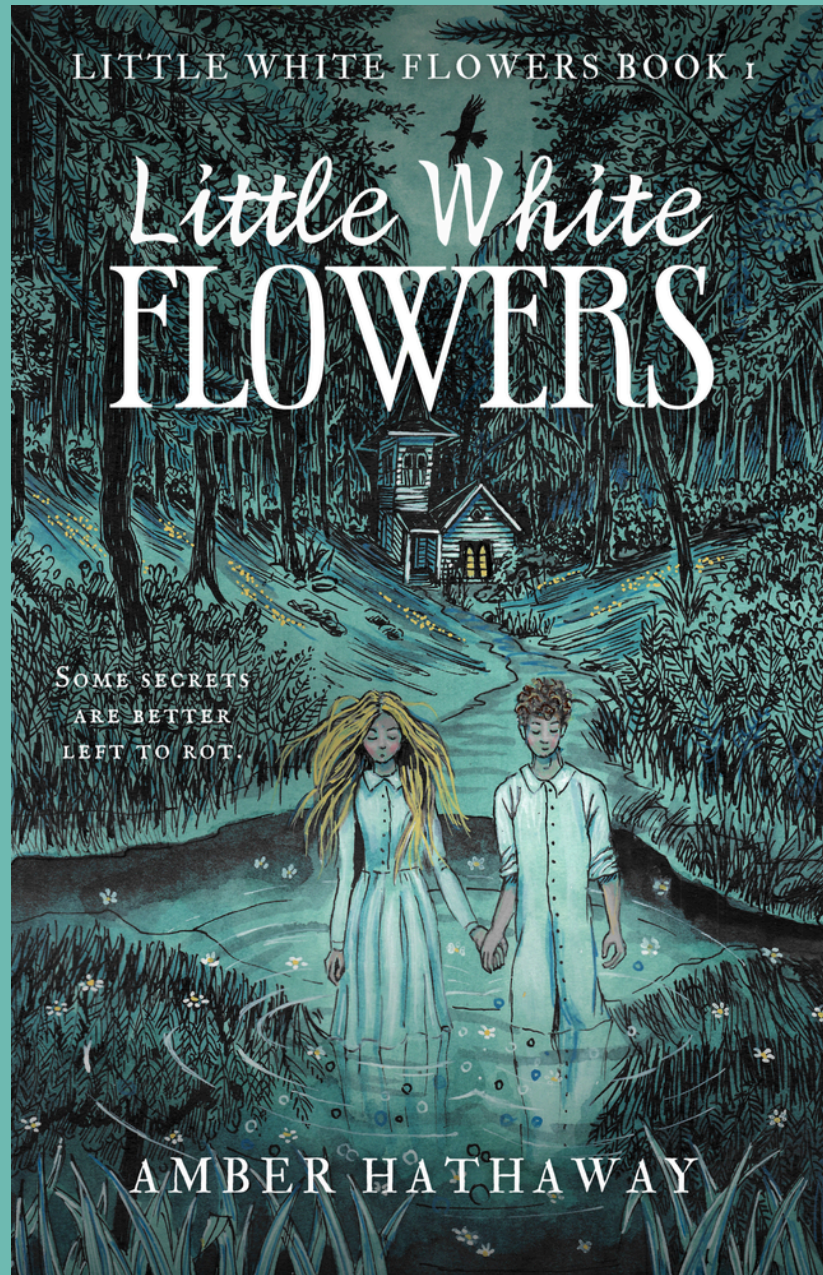


LITTLE WHITE FLOWERS

BOOK CLUB KIT



Discussion questions, author Q&A, and more

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Praise for Little White Flowers

“Much like Shirley Jackson, Hathaway’s gentle storytelling is like inhaling the aroma of a fresh cut flower, oblivious to the undercurrent of rot until it has settled deep into your bones.”

—Sage Nestler, author and Editor-in-Chief of *Pride with a Bite*



“Each page is drenched with horror that gets under your skin and refuses to let you go.”

—Mallory McCartney, author of *The Exchange and Other Calamities*



“Wow! What a world Amber Hathaway has created! The writing style is so descriptive, and Amber really brings her characters to life.”

—Bethany Russo, author of *Fever Dreams*

Welcome!

Thank you for taking interest in my debut novel, *Little White Flowers*. I put together this kit to facilitate a more engaging reading experience. While I designed it with book clubs in mind, if you're reading solo, you may still find some of the material useful and enjoyable. Feel free to use the items in the kit in any order you would like or to omit items if they don't fit with your book club style. I'm also happy to meet with book clubs virtually, schedules permitting, so if you would like to have me there for part of the meeting so you can pick my brain, feel free to reach out. You can contact me at amber.hathaway.author@gmail.com.

I started the kit with an "About the Author" section so you can get to know me a little bit better. In addition to my author bio, I also have five facts about me that I thought were particularly relevant to *Little White Flowers* and to my writing more generally. Some of these facts may give you an idea as to why horror is so deeply ingrained in my DNA.

Next up is a Q&A in which I answer common questions about *Little White Flowers* and talk a little bit about my writing process. Some of my answers may speak to the discussion questions, so it's up to you whether you want to read my answers before discussion or to discuss and then see what I have to say.

After the Q&A, I have the discussion questions. I tried to pick a mixture of general questions and questions more specific to the story. However, these are just some ideas. Feel free to change up the questions as you see fit.

I also have a "Read, Watch, Listen" list in which I share writing, movies, and music that relate to *Little White Flowers* in one way or another. It consists of a mixture of media pieces referenced in the book as well as pieces that reminded me or others of the book. I had a lot of fun putting this together, and I'm always eager to hear what other books, movies, and music my work reminds people of, so if you have comps, feel free to send them my way. I think one of my favorites to date is one of my reviewers said that *Little White Flowers* was like a "more serious *Hot Fuzz*."

I'm a huge fan of epistolary fiction, so I also included a copy of Riley's letter as well as the pages from Ellen's diary referenced in the book. To conclude this kit, I provided some information about the forthcoming sequel, *Hallowed Deadly Seeds*, as well as how you can stay up-to-date on my writing projects.

Happy reading!



About the Author

I'm Amber Hathaway, a horror and dark fiction writer. I've been writing horror stories with quirky characters since I was eight and have been publishing my fiction since 2023. My short stories have appeared in various anthologies. *Little White Flowers*, the first book in my Little White Flowers series, is my debut novel.

I hold a PhD in Physics from the University of Maine, among other degrees. When not writing or reading, I enjoy crafting, cosplaying, galavanting around my neighborhood in search of Pokémon, and cataloging whichever butterflies come my way. I live in central Maine with my equally eccentric partner, Brian Toner. I'm also an autistic ace with all the anxiety.



Five Facts about Me

1. I was born in Bangor, Maine.
2. I spent a lot of time growing up at my local libraries and served on the Young Adult Advisory Board at the Bangor Public Library.
3. The first horror movie I remember watching was *Arachnophobia*. I saw it when I was about five.
4. Red roses are my favorite flowers.
5. When I was little, my dad would take me and my siblings on lengthy car rides all across Maine. We spent a lot of time driving down dirt roads without a house in sight. It was great fuel for my imagination and is likely part of why I love to set stories in rural Maine.



Q&A with Amber Hathaway

What inspired *Little White Flowers*?

“Children of the Corn” by Stephen King. I read *Night Shift* as a teen, and “Children of the Corn” raised a question for me that ultimately spawned this story.

Why did you write this book?

I think with *Little White Flowers*, it was largely a right time, right place situation. My main characters, Alice and Andy, predate this story by a couple of years. I had tried writing tales with them before but soon abandoned each project. But once I combined these characters with the premise of *Little White Flowers*, the words came flowing out of me. I composed the first draft in 21 days.

As for why I stuck with it through rewrites and dozens of rounds of edits, it was because I believed in the characters and the story. I haven’t looked at the original draft in ages, but I imagine if I were to read through it now, beneath all the imperfections I would still find the seeds of a powerful story.

What was the most challenging part of writing this book?

I wrote the first draft when I was nineteen. Even though I had been an avid reader since a young age, I didn’t know much about storytelling or story structure. The hardest part was turning that first rough draft into something worth reading. I completely overhauled the manuscript twice, and I performed countless smaller-scale edits, some on my own and some with the help of my amazing editorial team. But I’m so glad I put the time and energy into making the book the best it can be. It has come a long way, and I couldn’t be prouder of the end result.

What can readers hope to gain from this book?

First and foremost, I hope readers will be entertained by the story. But beyond that, I hope that *Little White Flowers* provides some folks with a different perspective on autism. There are as many ways to be autistic as there are autistic people, but so often in media, we are reduced to a small number of rigid stereotypes. Alice certainly has her struggles, and hopefully her POV chapters will help readers understand those a little bit more. But there are also so many things she can do. Her life isn’t necessarily better or worse because she’s autistic. It’s just different.

Q&A with Amber Hathaway

Your primary POV character, Alice, struggles with anxiety and panic. Is that something you can relate to?

Absolutely. I've dealt with anxiety for as long as I can remember, although it really became intense when I was in my mid-twenties. One thing I hope to accomplish with Alice's story is to show how painful and terrifying anxiety and panic can be. I also want to provide an alternative to the "defeating anxiety" narrative that is popular in books with anxious protagonists. There's nothing wrong with books that do that, and they can be very powerful and empowering to some. But I wanted to provide an alternate narrative focusing on perseverance through ongoing anxiety, which better matches my lived experiences.

People will say that anxiety is all in your head, but that's not really true, not from a physiological standpoint. It's a full-body experience, and as with any other emotion, you can't just decide you're not going to feel it anymore. You may be able to use certain techniques to de-escalate in the moment, but permanently getting rid of this anxiety is out of the question for many of us, which is why I feel like Alice's story is so important. Anxiety definitely makes life harder, but you can still thrive and succeed with it.

What's your writing process like?

I'm largely a discovery writer. Going into a novel, I usually have a sense of how the story begins as well as a possible ending. I often use what's called the flashlight method. Basically, picture the story as a cavern. The chapter I'm working on is what's in the center of the flashlight beam. I have some sense of the next few chapters to come, those that are still partially illuminated by the flashlight, and I often know very little about what lurks in the shadows. But as I move deeper into the cavern, in other words, as I progress through the story, my flashlight beam slowly illuminates additional areas until I know everything the cavern contains.

What's next for you?

My main focus right now is my Little White Flowers series. Book 2 is complete and is available for pre-order now. The third and final book in the series is drafted but needs some editing. I'm also currently drafting a prequel to the series set in the 1940s, a 90s Fear Street-esque YA novel, and I have a short story collection in the works as well. To say things have been busy around here would be an understatement.

LWF Discussion Questions

1. What emotions did you feel while reading *Little White Flowers*? Were there any scenes or moments that were particularly impactful to you? What about them made you feel that way?
2. *Little White Flowers* is marketed as a slow burn. Do you feel like that's an accurate assessment? Did the pacing help or hinder your reading experience?
3. How did you feel about Evanston? Are there any parallels you see between their society and ours? Or do the two feel completely different?
4. If you had to pick a message or takeaway from the book, what would it be? Why?
5. If you were to make a playlist for this book, what song or songs would you include?
6. Would you consider *Little White Flowers* feminist horror? Why or why not?
7. When Alice and Andy start piecing together the truth about Evanston, they have very different reactions. How would you have approached the situation if you had been in their shoes? Would you have stayed to find out the truth? Left to seek help? Explain.
8. It's mentioned in the book that Alice is autistic and Andy has ADHD. What was it like reading from their perspectives? Were they easier or harder to understand than other characters? Could you relate to either of them?
9. Many stories with an anxious protagonist focus around the protagonist overcoming their anxiety. Alice perseveres in spite of her anxiety, but she still shows signs of anxiety at the end of the book. How did that make you feel? Would you have preferred to see her overcome her anxiety?
10. What were your thoughts on the ending? Did it work, or would you have liked to see something different? Are you excited for the sequel?
11. Eva Mout (<https://www.ursusart.studio/>) designed the cover illustration based on a scene from the book. Do you feel like the illustration reflects the story as a whole well? Why or why not?



Read, Watch, Listen

The following books, movies, and songs are a mixture of media directly referenced in *Little White Flowers* (denoted with an *) and comp titles or other media with a similar vibe to *Little White Flowers*. Pick a few that interest you. What connections do you see between your chosen media and *Little White Flowers*, if any?



- *The Icarus Girl* by Helen Oyeyemi*
- “Civil Disobedience” by Henry David Thoreau*
- “Hold Fast to Dreams” by Langston Hughes*
- “Children of the Corn” by Stephen King
- *Little Eve* by Catriona Ward
- “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson
- *The Burning Girls* by C.J. Tudor



- *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)*
- *Messiah of Evil* (1974)*
- *Amityville 4: The Evil Escapes* (1989)*
- *Rose Red* (2002)*
- *Nightmare Castle* (1966)*
- *Children of the Corn* (1984)
- *The Wicker Man* (1973)
- *Midsommar* (2019)
- *Hot Fuzz* (2007)



- “Imaginary” by Evanescence*
- “Lonely Day” by System of a Down*
- “I Want It That Way” by the Backstreet Boys*
- “In the Mood” by The Glenn Miller Orchestra*
- “Imperfections” by Evanescence
- “Renegade” by Big Red Machine (feat. Taylor Swift)

Good evening my fellow citizens,

I am writing to you today to make an entreaty on behalf of Alice Drayton. I hope that the picture I present here will do her justice and convince you of the need to pardon her.

Alice is one of the most conscientious and kind individuals I have met. Her heart truly knows bounds. She has the deepest appreciation and reverence for all of God's Creation. She abhors violence and is committed to making the world a better place for all of humanity. To kill so gentle a woman when she has committed no crime would be the single greatest miscarriage of justice this town has seen. Indeed, her only mistake in this ordeal was placing her trust in me.

Regarding the matter at hand, it is I, not Alice, who erred. She is a curious individual, as might be expected of someone with her intellect, and she turned to me for answers about what had happened to her grandmother's beloved sister. She had no idea what she was asking nor the stakes, whereas I understood the consequences. You may wonder why I proceeded, knowing the risk. I must admit it came from a foolish notion that I could be discreet enough to evade notice, at which I failed miserably.

I fully admit my guilt in this matter and am willing to accept the consequences. While I am aware that the intelligence I have given her places you in a challenging position, I hope that you will consider an alternative to what has been intimated to me will happen to her and Andy. They are innocent in this matter and do not deserve to be put to death.

Sincerely, Riley Cornelius Moore

P.S. I should also like to clear the air on another charge. I know this has little bearing on the present meeting, but I should like it to be known that the charges of impropriety leveled against us should fall squarely on my head. I acted impulsively, assuming I would soon make her my wife, should she have me. It is my deepest regret that my imprudence has cost us the beautiful future we could have known together.

July 1st. 1943

Today is the day of the Ceremony. I am so nervous. I suppose it wouldn't be quite so torturous were my fate sealed, as is the case with Annie and Becky, but this uncertainty is taking its toll on me.

Louise would be the obvious choice, were it not for her peculiarities. I never would have guessed that something so trivial would matter so much, but too many folks are prejudiced against her eccentricities. I overheard Papa telling Mr. Moore the other day that he still wasn't sure what his decision would be. We all know Papa has a certain fondness for Louise, her being the firstborn and rightfully the chosen one, but there has been a lot of pressure on him to pick me. Even Mother thinks I would be the more suitable choice.

Mother is calling me now. I still have so much to say! I'll try to write again after the Service, but if this should turn out to be my final entry, then Dearest Diary, know that I am grateful to you for listening to me always. I could not have asked for a more loyal confidant!

Later

It has been decided. I received a white rose during the Procession, along with Becky and Annie. There were audible gasps in the congregation when I received mine. Vern cornered Papa after the service and begged him to reconsider. Dear, sweet Vern, it shall pain me greatly to say goodbye to him. But it is done now, and for that, I am glad. So it shall be Annie, Becky, and me. This year's crop of Little White Flowers.

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to read and discuss *Little White Flowers*! If you feel inclined, please consider leaving a review on Goodreads, Amazon, Google, or your favorite book retailer or social media site. It helps this little book find its way into the hands of more eager readers.

Want a sneak peek at *Hallowed Deadly Seeds*, the second book in the Little White Flowers series? Sign up for my newsletter to receive a link to preview the first four chapters. Join my newsletter at: <https://www.amberhathaway.com/contact>

You can also follow me on Instagram, Threads, or YouTube @amber_hathaway_writes and on Bluesky @amber-hathaway.bsky.social. I'm most active on Instagram, but I post all major announcements to all of my socials.

