TRACES OF GUILT
by Dee Henderson

Evie Blackwell loves her life as an Illinois State Police detective . . . mostly. She’s very skilled at investigations and has steadily moved up through the ranks. She would like to find Mr. Right, but she has a hard time imagining how marriage could work, considering the demands of her job.

Gabriel Thane is a lifetime resident of Carin County and now its sheriff, a job he loves. Gabe is committed to upholding the law and cares deeply for the residents he’s sworn to protect. He too would like to find a lifetime companion, a marriage like his parents have.

When Evie arrives in Carin, Illinois, it’s to help launch a new task force dedicated to reexamining unsolved crimes across the state. Spearheading this trial run, Evie will work with the sheriff’s department on a couple of its most troubling missing-persons cases. As she reexamines old evidence to pull out a few tenuous new leads, she unearths a surprising connection... possibly to a third cold case. Evie’s determined to solve the cases before she leaves Carin County, and Sheriff Thane, along with his family, will be key to those answers.

ISBN 9780764218866

Discussion Questions:

1. Does Carin County sound like a place you would like to live?
2. Of the three Thane brothers—Gabriel, Will, and Joshua—which is your favorite and why?

3. Evie made a first impression on Gabriel that she found embarrassing and wished she could change; she made an effort to leave a different impression when they met for the second time. Have you ever been in her situation, where you wished you could go back and change the first impression you made on someone?

4. Did you expect a body to be found on the uncle’s property during the search? Who did you expect to be found?

5. What did you think when the Florist family was found and you learned what happened to them?

6. As Evie formed a friendship with Gabriel Thane, they often talked about their personal lives. What surprised you about what they shared?

7. Evie’s brother Sam died in a childhood accident. How did that shape Evie’s life? Did you have any traumatic experiences in your own childhood? If so, how did you handle them?

8. Karen had the courage to testify at a murder trial, and the jury didn’t believe her. Instead, they returned and a not guilty verdict and a killer walked free. How do you think you would react in that situation?

9. If you were Karen, when would you have told Will the truth about your past?

10. What do you like about Evie Blackwell? What do you wish you knew more about her?

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