

***The Wild Side* Reader's Group Discussion Guide**

by Laura Haywood-Cory

The stories in *The Wild Side* ask us to examine the liminal spaces—thresholds—in our lives: that sensation between fear and desire, the twilight minutes between day and night; even Earth itself is on the border, balanced between Heaven and Hell, angels above, demons below. In these pages, Mark L. Van Name and friends beckon us to cross over the threshold and come ... to the wild side.

Overall questions:

1. *The Wild Side* is full of relationships between humans and the other—werewolves, vampires, faeries, demons, angels. What makes these encounters exciting to us?
2. In your own life, what sorts of relationships are forbidden? Are the barriers put up by society, by law, by religion?
3. Have you ever defied custom and had a relationship with someone "other"? What were the consequences?
4. Which story in this collection is your favorite, and why?
5. Which one did you find the most thought-provoking?

"Song Sung Red":

1. The hunter becomes the hunted. Does seduction always require one person to be prey?
2. Why are we attracted to vampires?
3. Have you ever felt like you were cursed? What lengths would you go to in order to break a curse?

"Careless of the Night":

1. Are there times when you feel invisible? Do you enjoy it?
2. Are you dreading or looking forward to growing old? Or both?
3. At what age do you define "old"? Is it different now than it was when you were younger?
4. If you could be a were-creature, what would you be, and why?

"For a Good Time, Call..."

1. What do you think it would feel like to be surrounded by people who had a talent that you didn't share?
2. Is there such a thing as too much sex?
3. Would you date an incubus/succubus? Why or why not?

"Fine Print"

1. Have you ever wanted something so badly that you'd sell your soul to get it?
2. Do you believe that you have a soul?

"Unawares"

1. What's your image of an angel? Do you believe in them?
2. Would you be able to kill a lover just because s/he had become a vampire?

"Of Sex and Zombies"

1. How hard would you fight to save someone you loved?
2. Have you ever faced violent opposition to your romantic choices?

"Love Knot"

1. If faced with the temptation to become all-powerful, what would you do?
2. What do you think of the purloined letter trick as utilized here?

"Beauty is a Witch"

1. What's worth more to you—your life or your immortal soul? Would you make a deal with the devil to save your life?
2. Is there an up side to being in thrall to a demon?

"The Long Dark Night of Diego Chan"

1. How would you enforce the supernatural equivalent of a Do Not Resuscitate order?
2. Is vampirism—or being turned into a werewolf or zombie, for that matter—a potential cure for terminal illnesses? Is it a price you'd be willing to pay?
3. Could you stand by while a loved one made a choice—either to embrace vampirism to "cure" their cancer, or to reject immortality and die—that you disagreed with?

"Born Under a Bad Sign"

1. How do you feel about the idea of angels as sexual beings, as whores?
2. Who is the man in black?

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