

## **Reading Group Guide** *In the Line of Duty* **by Carolyn Arnold**

### **Discussion Questions**

1. The opening chapter lets you into Madison's personal life and her thoughts on romance and vulnerability. Why do you think the author chose to start the book this way?
2. What would you say is the deeper message and takeaway from this book?
3. In chapter four, Madison reflects on how the media often paints police officers as being in the wrong, even when that's not the case. Do you feel this is a valid point in real life, and why?
4. Madison and her boyfriend, Troy—along with the entire Stiles PD—face a huge loss, and they each have his or her own way of working through grief and finding acceptance. How are Madison's and Troy's processes different? Do you think their grieving processes are healthy, and why?
5. Madison has been burned by love before and finds it hard to open up to a potential partner. What makes Troy a good or bad choice for her?
6. Madison mentions adrenaline helping her through difficult situations a few times in the book. Has this ever been the case for you in your life? If so, share your experience with the group.
7. Madison's drive has always been to find justice, but this case is especially frustrating to her. Why?
8. Police officers need to make a threat assessment whenever they approach a subject or suspect. There are times they have to make the call to shoot someone to save other lives. Troy and his fellow officers had to deal with this. Do you think they made the right decision? If you were in their position—or any kind of life-threatening situation—what would you have done?
9. Troy's pet name for Madison is Bulldog because she's like a dog with a bone when it comes to pursuing leads in a case. Discuss different points in the story when this was an obvious trait of hers.
10. The characters in this book experience a range of emotions as part of their grieving process. What emotions do you see them feel and when? Have you lost someone, and if so, do you think the author captured the range of emotions eloquently? Do you think that the author *accurately* showed the emotions inherent with this process?
11. Madison has a complicated relationship with her mother. What elements contribute to this?
12. Madison's partner, Terry, bought her a chocolate Lab for Christmas thinking it would be good for Madison to have someone to love and to come home to. Madison used to think dogs were overrated, but now she's in love with Hershey. How does she show she has accepted him as family?
13. How does Madison's fear of commitment and getting hurt affect her actions toward Troy and their relationship? Do you think she'd rather just give in, accept Troy's love, and give herself over fully to the relationship? Why?

14. For a relationship to work, Madison believes there needs to be open communication, including discussing each other's feelings. What do you believe makes for a strong relationship?

15. Stiles is a fictional city in the United States, but violence and hatred toward cops is a worldwide epidemic. How does this social climate affect you locally? What role are you playing to improve the situation in your community?

16. Police officers face difficult situations every day, and because they are just people, sometimes humor is needed to help them deal with what's before them. Discuss times in the book where these lighthearted moments of levity come up and if you feel they are appropriate.

17. The police force is often recognized as the brotherhood of blue. Discuss the different ways they stand by their own in this book.

18. Discuss Madison's growth throughout the novel, focusing specifically on her relationship with Troy.

19. How would you say the author shows the human side of policing in this novel? How does the job affect its officers?

## **Cop Talk**

*BOLO* – The code used when cops should “Be on the lookout” for something, such as a specific car/license plate.

*Bullet* – The projectile that is expelled from a gun.

*Casing* – The material that surrounds the bullet, which is made to fit within the chamber.

*Crime scene* – A physical location where evidence can be gathered to support an investigation. This is not to be confused with scene of the crime, which indicates precisely where an offense has taken place.

*Mourning band* – A black band that is placed on an officer’s badge to indicate remembrance of a fallen officer. Sometimes this black band has a blue line through the center.

*Panic button* – A button found on an officer’s radio that he or she can push if in danger. This clears all radio traffic for a few seconds allowing the officer to speak, and it also alerts the communications office as to the officer’s exact location so backup can be immediately dispatched.

*Projectile* – An object that is propelled with great force. For example, a bullet.

*Round* – This refers to a bullet still housed in its casing.

*Squad room* – The room in a police department where officers are briefed before their shifts and given their assignments.

*Subject* – The term used to describe a person of interest.

### **Police Procedure Trivia**

1. When does the law consider a group of people a gang?
2. How should a flashbang be delivered?
3. Are Kevlar vests truly bulletproof?
4. What is the difference between a bullet and a round?
5. If investigators only have a bullet or a casing, can they always confirm the make and model of a gun?