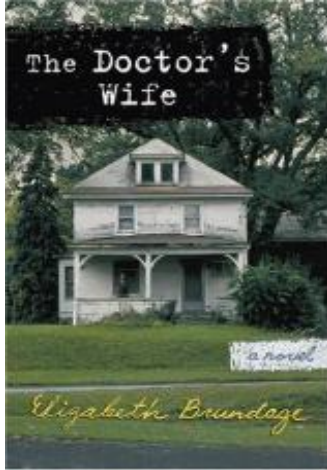


# The Doctor's Wife

by Elizabeth Brundage

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## About the Book

"The memory starts here, in my apron pocket, with the gun."

Lydia Haas is devoted to Jesus, her church, and her husband. Only recently, after it's too late, has she understood how much she has sacrificed to all of them.

Michael Knowles is a rising young doctor, an OB/gyn at a prominent hospital. A man committed to his principles, to rescues with uncertain outcomes; to his wife. The life they've made. He never intended to have to make a choice.

Annie Knowles is the "doctor's wife." The first time she walked into their 1812 Federal-style home in High Meadow, an idyllic town in upstate New York, she thought she'd be happy there forever. But that dream wore thin, and another man - a colleague at the local college where Annie teaches - is insinuating himself slowly, surely, passionately into her life.

Simon Haas' paintings of his wife Lydia - dating from when she was a child - made him famous. The story behind those paintings, and behind his marriage, is not one Simon chooses to tell. Until he meets Annie Knowles.

Elizabeth Brundage's stunning debut work of fiction is the story of these four and the cataclysmic intersection of their lives.

## Discussion Guide

1. The thriller plot of **The Doctor's Wife** deals with violence against doctors who perform abortions. How did your own views about abortion affect your reading of the book?
2. Although the thriller plot focuses on the doctor, Michael Knowles, the title suggests the most important character is

his wife Annie. Why?

3. Annie's affair with Simon is sure to press as many hot buttons as her husband's work in the women's clinic. How did you feel about the affair? Was it "justified"?

4. Lydia's religious beliefs are exploited by a "reverend" with a political agenda. Who's responsible for her actions --- Lydia, Reverend Tim, or both?

5. Mothers beam when their daughters marry doctors, but Annie is disappointed in Michael precisely because he is a doctor. Medicine, she believes, has turned him into a "weary, densitized workaholic." That could be a description of many professional men. Would it be better if those men married women in their professions?

6. "They had come to a place in their marriage when they were blind to one another, and it was mutual." How does this change for Annie and Michael over the course of the book? What do you think happens to Michael and Annie?

7. Simon teaches Annie's class one day, and delivers a lecture --- directed at his wife --- about black-and-white. "Gray is where you want to go, but it's difficult," he says. In reading this book, do you feel the author prodding you to see life in its complexity, as shades of gray? Or is that a rationalization people adopt when, say, they're having affairs?

8. How do Simon Haas' paintings of Lydia reveal how he views women? Does this view change when he gets to know Annie?

9. How do you visualize Simon's work? What painter's work do you see?

10. Which character, if any, were you sympathetic towards? Why?

11. Talk about the theme of guilt that runs through the book. Annie is guilty about her affair with Simon. Michael is guilty about his relationship with Celina. Simon is guilty about his life with Lydia. Lydia is guilty about murdering her father. What does this guilt do to the characters?

12. When you first started reading this book did you expect that the story would take the twists and turns that it did? What surprised you most?

## Author Bio

Elizabeth Brundage is the author of five novels, including *ALL THINGS CEASE TO APPEAR*, which was a *WSJ* best mystery of 2016, and was the basis for the Netflix film *Things Heard and Seen*. She is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop where she received a James Michener Award, and attended the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. Her writing has appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *Witness*, *New Letters*, *Greensboro Review* and elsewhere. She has taught at several colleges and universities and lives with her family in Albany, New York.

## Critical Praise

"**The Doctor's Wife** is certainly a tense and compelling psychological thriller, but it's more than just a page turner. In her dark depiction of small-town intolerance, Brundage invites us to question our moral assumptions, social responsibilities, in short, our engagement with the world. My favorite (and truly the darkest and saddest) line of the book is the very last.

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### **The Doctor's Wife**

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**Publication Date:** November 29, 2005

**Genres:** Fiction, Thriller

**Paperback:** 352 pages

**Publisher:** Plume

**ISBN-10:** 0452286913

**ISBN-13:** 9780452286917