

*"The New Neighbor is a dizzying descent into a Byzantine maze of psychological suspense." –S. A. COSBY,
New York Times bestselling author of Razorblade Tears and Blacktop Wasteland*

THE NEW NEIGHBOR

A Thriller

CARTER WILSON

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

READING GROUP GUIDE

1. What would you do if you won the lottery? Would that change if your win came after terrible news like Marlowe's?
2. Like his father, Marlowe always plays the same lotto numbers, but Marlowe's numbers each represent something significant to him. If you were to use significant numbers from your own life, what would they be and why?
3. In choosing Bury, Marlowe leaves behind everything he knows. Why did he do that, and what are the unintended consequences for himself, Bo, and Maggie?
4. Threatening notes would be disturbing no matter what, but how did you feel about the signature: WE WHO WATCH? How does the suggestion of a group change the way Marlowe investigates?

5. Despite the threats and the house's unsettling history, Marlowe refuses to consider selling. Why? Would you cut your losses in his position?
6. Describe Marlowe's parenting style. How does his concern for Bo and Maggie manifest itself?
7. The security advisor triggers Marlowe's paranoia. Would you be willing to fill out the invasive questionnaire? Did you see an alternative?
8. List Marlowe's coping mechanisms. How many of them are self-destructive?
9. How did you feel when you found out how Christopher died? If he'd lived, what kind of man do you think he would have become?
10. Marlowe believes in fate and superstitions. Do you? If everything happens for a reason, how would you explain the end of the book?
11. Characterize Chief Sike. How did your first impression of him compare to your feelings at the end of the book?

A CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR

Marlowe and his dad hail from Ireland. Do you have ties to that part of the world?

Not currently, though I recently did some genetic tracing and learned I'm 72 percent British and Irish, so maybe my long-dead ancestors were summoning my characters to be Irish. My only time in Ireland consisted of a 48-hour whirlwind trip from Colorado to Dublin to see my favorite band. Some dude tried to mug me in the street, so there's that.

Marlowe is a very unreliable narrator. How did you keep track of what you knew as a writer versus what he knew as a narrator?

Marlowe becomes more and more unhinged as the story progresses, which was quite intentional (and fun as hell to write). But when you're writing from the perspective of someone like that, it's easy to conflate things imagined and real. So I needed to literally write those things out to keep it all straight. There's a list of "what Marlowe believes" and "what really happened." The tricky part is I don't outline, so both those lists

continue to grow as the story progresses. Then, of course, there's endless amounts of editing after I get hopelessly confused with it all.

***The New Neighbor* shares a setting with your previous book, *The Dead Husband*. What kept you coming back to Bury, New Hampshire?**

Man, I loved creating Bury. It was the first time I set a story in a fictional location, and I was a gleeful little kid with Legos in regard to all the world-building I got to do. I don't have any desire to write an endless series of books set in Bury, but I knew that after writing *The Dead Husband*, I wasn't yet done with that town. I wanted to return to Bury and, most importantly, back to the Yates house. That mansion was its own character, and I wanted it to loom with a purposeful menace over the two books. I think it does.

In need of support, Marlowe summons his father. Who would you call in his position?

Let's hope I'm never in his position (well, except maybe the lottery part). But I'm pretty sure I'd call my buddy Drew, who's a cop in California with the coolest and most easygoing demeanor you can imagine. He's the person you want around to keep things calm when everything is spiraling out of control. I'm not sure he'd know what to do either, but he'd keep me from freaking the hell out.

Where do your characters come from? Are there any you can point to that resemble people in your life?

Well, as most authors would probably say, my characters are a tapestry of both people I know or have observed, either in life or fiction. I rarely set out thinking of specific traits from specific people that I want

a character to exhibit; rather, I think of traits I find interesting for someone to have, then see how real that feels when I'm writing it out. Looking at Marlowe, for example, I see bits of myself, bits of some of my friends, and a smidge of Jack Torrance from *The Shining*. That character needed to be, at his core, a good person but one who was so broken from life events that he had to fight against a slow untethering from reality, often failing.

What do you read when you need a break from thrillers?

Currently, my TBR pile consists almost completely of nonfiction. I particularly gravitate toward memoirs and biographies, because I love a good origin story. I think reading true-life accounts of extraordinary people provides me with key insights as I'm crafting my own characters, who I want to also be extraordinary yet relatable. Right now, I'm reading the biography of stage and film director Mike Nichols (*The Graduate*), and it's fascinating.