

Book Club Kit

Death in the Downline

A Multi-Level
Marketing
Murder Mystery

MARIA
ABRAMS

Hey, hun!

How do people fall for MLMs? This is the question at the root of *Death In The Downline*, and one that has a complicated answer.

For one, no one is too smart to join an MLM. I've known medical doctors who have been sucked into a MLM. MLMs prey on weaknesses, which we all have. Friends, financial independence, a purpose, freedom; whatever you feel you're lacking or wanting, they'll target it. They're so good at psychological and emotional manipulation that intelligence isn't even a factor.

I also believe people in MLMs are some of the hardest workers. Those on the lower levels (the majority of distributors) work from morning to night posting, messaging, commenting, and trying to make sales.

In *Death in the Downline*, anyone can be pulled into an MLM. Your best friend from high school, the wife of the local pastor, the woman in your spin class who used to be a social worker. Even you.

Thank you so much for reading this book. And I hope it makes you think next time a random message pops up saying "Hey, hun!"

xoxo, Maria Abrams

HUNgry?

Great news! We have the perfect menu for your downline party or your girls' night slumber party! #BossBabe

Grande hot white mocha, three pumps, with sweet cream foam and caramel drizzle

Pizza bagels

Milk Duds

Sour gummy worms

Pork roll and cheese sandwiches

Diet Coke

Veggie crudité's platter with low-fat yogurt dip

California roll (no rice! Just a cucumber wrap)

Air-fried chickpeas

Greek salad skewer with tomato, olive, cucumber, feta

Strawberry on a stick

Chardonnay with an ice cube



Playlist

Listen to the *Death in the Downline* playlist, curated by Maria Abrams, at <https://open.spotify.com/user/quirkbooks> or use these tracks as a starting point for your own playlist!

Bills, Bills, Bills by Destiny's Child

Rich Girl by Gwen Stefani and Eve

Toxic by Britney Spears

Judas by Lady Gaga

Boss Bitch by Doja Cat

Honesty by Nelly Furtado

Beautiful, Dirty, Rich by Lady Gaga

Heads Will Roll by Yeah Yeah Yeahs

Glamorous by Fergie and Ludacris

Poison by Alice Cooper

Hysteria by Def Leppard

Livin' on a Prayer by Bon Jovi

Bad Medicine by Bon Jovi

Mean Girls - Charli XCX

Gimme More by Britney Spears

Discuss *Death in the Downline*

Review the following questions to get some conversation about *Death in the Downline* started.

1. *Death in the Downline* dives into the strange world of multi-level marketing, or “MLMs”. What is your personal experience with MLMs? Have you known someone who was part of one, or watched any of the documentaries about them, such as *LuLaRich* or *Betting on Zero*?
2. Some of the over-the-top moments in the book (like the LuminSANITY conference) are based on real aspects of various MLM companies. Were there any moments that surprised you, or prompted you to do your own research?
3. Drew gets involved in LuminUS partially because of economic precarity. What are some other reasons someone might get involved in an MLM?
4. The LuminUS Ladies are selling a lifestyle as much as a product, showing off expensive cars and perfect houses while some of them are secretly drowning in debt. What about our culture encourages this kind of behavior? Do you think social media is to blame?
5. Do you empathize with Steph’s position, or do you feel like she is guilty in LuminUS’ damage to the people in her downline?
6. Steph’s husband calls LuminUS a cult. Do you think that MLMs can reach cult status?
7. The book explores several complicated relationship dynamics. What do you think it has to say about female friendship? About the power dynamics between spouses?
8. Were you surprised when the real murderer was revealed?

