

READING GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

FOOL ON THE HILL

by Morgan Hunt

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About the Book:

When lesbian breast cancer survivor Tess discovers the mutilated, crucified body of her straight housemate's favorite rock star, everyone is stunned. He was a mellow Buddhist musician living peacefully in Laguna Beach – who'd want to hurt him? And is the corpse really him? With fingertips and teeth removed, it's hard to determine.

Aided by her hetero housemate, Tess snoops at the homes of Hollywood music producers, at Lego Land, in a fundamentalist church, and on a carousel to find answers, slowing down only for AWOL zoo animals and her first post-mastectomy erotic encounter.

Discussion Questions:

1. For a forty-something woman, Tess' character is very much in touch with her inner child. How does this trait manifest in "Fool on the Hill"?
2. Knowing her predominantly progressive reading audience might make certain assumptions about a fundamentalist Christian suspect in the story, the author plays on those assumptions and stereotypes. What other religious stereotypes are in evidence in the story?
3. In Chapter 11, the perpetrator disposes of evidence at a swap meet. Have you been to a swap meet? Are swap meets and flea markets, once common in America, being replaced by malls and eBay?
4. Have you ever been to San Diego? If you have, what descriptions of San Diego scenes in the book do you find most evocative? If you haven't been, is there a description that makes you want to pack a bag and go?
5. The book is written with a light, quirky humor, but throughout the story, the author interspersed chapters from the point of view of the perpetrator. Did the contrast of light and dark perspectives work for you as a reader? Was it hard to "switch gears"? Why do you think the author did this?
6. Would Tess solve the mystery without the assistance of her housemate Lana? How important is Lana to the series?

Critical Praise:

"You will be fooled (by FOOL ON THE HILL), which is half the fun of reading a mystery. Morgan Hunt gets better and better as a writer. Three cheers." --Rita Mae Brown, *New York Times* best-selling author

"Fool on the Hill is a thrill ride full of ...wit, spine-tingling fun and one terrific escape from reality, Morgan Hunt-style." – May 2008 issue, *Jane & Jane Magazine*

"This one is the whole package – characters who continue to grow, a great story, wonderful writing, and wicked humor." – May 2008, issue, Houston's *OutSmart Magazine*

"The mystery in this book is good and has some delightful red herrings to tantalize the reader, but the character development is what really makes it a winner." – ReviewedbyLiz.com, April 22, 2008.

"*Fool on the Hill* is fast paced, engaging and fun." – M.J.'s Bookshelf blog, May 23, 2008.

Excerpt:

Chapter 1: Thunderstorms and Other Moist Encounters

The stars are so far above the earth that we're usually oblivious to what's going on up there. While we brush our hair, comets dart through galaxies and sunspots dance into inky space. We grow bored in grocery lines as meteor showers sparkle and novas burst on the scene. We rarely know when we're being star-crossed.

But that captivating spring Saturday night, I knew one star would cross my path: I had primo tickets to a Gabrielle Leatheross concert! I'd soon hear the lovely growl and fiery riffs that gained her popularity not only with fellow lesbians but among rock lovers everywhere.

I picked up no negative vibes before the concert, no evil feelings at all. Oh, I had odd feelings. At least that's what some folks would say about a lesbian still living with a straight housemate she once had an affair with. Odd would be a kind word.

It's not that I haven't had honest to goodness lesbian romances. It's not that Lana hasn't been involved with men and still dates whenever she meets a decent prospect.

It's that we're true friends. We know each other's third grade teachers, ATM codes, breakfast food preferences, and birthmarks. We care more deeply than hormones run.

It's that San Diego is more affordable when housing costs are shared.

It's that nothing better has worked out long-term for either one of us. And it's the memory of an animal passion that used to course just below the surface of everything we did or said.

Eighty-two years ago, we'd hooked up when Lana was flirting with bisexuality. We entertained each other in bed and out for almost two years. Then, while waiting in line at her credit union, she connected with an unusually beautiful man, both a poet and a boxer, and decided that she had, after all, only been flirting.

Unlike many women my age who complain of diminished hormones, I am as sexually interested as a sailor on shore leave. And every once in a while, the sub of sexual tension between Lana and me raises its periscope, searching for trouble. Because I really do care for her, I keep all hands on deck.

I checked out my image in my bedroom mirror. The black boots and jeans looked right, but the red pullover didn't work.

I yanked a loose fitting white pirate-style shirt from a hanger and put it on. Loose fitting is important, because a while ago, my trans-abdominal rectus muscle bought a condo in my left breast: belly now resides where boob used to be. My ankle bone may still be connected to my leg bone, but my belly button has been resected; some innards turned outward, and my nerves have undergone numerous nasties, leaving strangely numb nether regions on the front half of me.

But it was better than dying of advanced invasive breast cancer.

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Author Bio: A Jersey native, Morgan Hunt's stint in the Navy brought her to San Diego, where she lived for 27 years doing every kind of writing gig imaginable. Now in Ashland, Oregon, this breast cancer survivor launched her Tess Camillo series with *STICKY FINGERS* (released April 2007) and has completed a third book, *BLINDED BY THE LIGHT*, due for September 2008 release.

Author Interview:

<http://www.readerviews.com/InterviewHuntMorgan.html>

Web site: www.morganhuntbooks.com

2006 winner, Writer's Digest Best Writer's Web Site Award.

This site features reviews, excerpts, chapter names, quotes, photos of settings, puzzles, contests, and author's contact information.