

READING GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

STICKY FINGERS

by Morgan Hunt

Publisher: Alyson Books

Number of Pages: 207

ISBN-13: 978-1593500030

Price: \$14.95

- ♦ Finalist, 2007 Reader Views Reviewers Choice Literary Award, GLBT category
- ♦ Nominated for Lambda Literary Award in Women's Mystery category
- ♦ Finalist, 2008 Golden Crown Literary Society Awards, Mystery category



About the Book:

Dust bunnies, yes; rattlesnakes, no. So thinks amateur sleuth Tess Camillo when, on an ordinary Saturday, she discovers a snake under her bed. She is convinced it was put there deliberately and says as much to the San Diego police, who refuse to take her seriously.

Weeks later, the body of Belle Farby is found on the UCSD campus Snake Path, dead of snake bite and with a rattlesnake's rattle in her pocket. The crime scene is rife with unusual circumstances and odd items, including buttons and hair dappling the victim's T-shirt.

Because of the rattler in her house, Tess is interviewed by police and becomes embroiled in their investigation. In the meantime, she must wage battle with an aggressive breast cancer and make peace with a modified body image.

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you describe the relationship between Lana and Tess? Will Tess ever find another lover while living with Lana? Can you picture Lana's face from the description in the book?
2. The serpent is one of the oldest and most widespread symbols, with different meanings attributed to it in different cultures; among them are sexual temptation, wisdom, seduction, fertility, or protection. What feelings are evoked in you by the snakes in this book? When the cosmic serpent is biting its tail, it symbolizes infinity and the cyclical nature of the cosmos. Did you get a sense of this in the mystery's solution?
3. Have you ever known anyone with needle phobia? What other weaknesses does Tess have? How does she deal with pain and loss?
4. Have you read any mystery writers or humorists who remind you of Morgan Hunt? Does the Tess series have appeal for mainstream audiences as well as the GLBT community?
5. How would you deal with a loved one's request that you assist him/her in committing suicide to spare this person the pain of a lingering death? Are there different kinds of murder? Is Darlene sufficiently punished for her acts?
6. How did you respond to the chapter names throughout "Sticky Fingers"? Did they pique your interest?

Critical Praise:

"STICKY FINGERS ... is fast-moving and clever, raunchy and sexy, serious and funny; a delight to read." - Marianne Moskowitz, *WomanSource Rising*, Winter 2007 issue

"...an engaging tale of equal parts murder, sharp dialogue, loss and humor."

– Chelsea Fine, *Just Out*, August 2007

"... Hunt's character development is so flawless you'll think she's been writing Tess Camillo mysteries for years. With style, wit, and an irrepressible sense of humor, Hunt draws you into the story and doesn't let go until the last word... and then leaves you wishing for more." - LaRita M. Heet, Editor-in-Chief, *Jane and Jane Magazine*, December 2007 issue

"This (STICKY FINGERS) is a terrific amateur sleuth tale...." - *The Mystery Gazette*, December 2007

"Glib, funny, heart-warming and heartbreaking, Hunt pulls the strings and has ... (the) reader thoroughly absorbed in Tess' life and antics before we can say 'snake-bite'...Funny, colorful, quirky and an absolute delight to read!" – Alex Wolfe, *WryWriter.com*

"Morgan Hunt's familiarity with breast cancer shows in the sensitivity, fear, strength, and dignity that she gives to Tess throughout her ordeal...(the author has) a wonderful sense of humor which comes through again and again; a great book." – Cherie Fisher, *Reader Views*

"Tess narrates with verve...an engaging swift read." - Ethan Boatner for *Lavender Magazine*, June 32007 *Pride* issue

"It's a genuine pleasure to read a mystery with smart writing. Morgan Hunt immediately captured my attention and made me shiver until learning the startling truth. I can't wait to read her next book."
--J. Miyoko Hensley, writer, *Murder She Wrote*

Excerpt:

Prologue

August snapped its suspenders against a proud chest of Santa Ana heat. Laboring against the invisible oppression of weather, I sprinkled aromatherapy oils on my clean bed linens and smoothed a pillowcase. When I bent down to gather the dirty sheets, I glanced toward the white ruffled bed skirt and saw a rattlesnake staring back at me.

Now what I knew about snakes you could hold in one hand – preferably an unbitten one. But it doesn't take much to know a rattler when you see one.

I looked at the specimen coiled on my bedroom floor about two feet away. He had cocoa diamonds along his back, blotches of taupe on his sides, and a definite pit viper head. I looked at his rattle. It wasn't shakin', but I was.

When the snake looked up at me, he saw a solid woman old enough to experience the occasional hot flash yet young enough to boogie. He saw thick chestnut hair with a few strands of silver. My ethnic print blouse belied remnants of my hippie days; the denim cutoffs just said it was Saturday. In all, I saw a handsome but dangerous snake; the snake saw a handsome but daunted woman.

Watching National Geographic, I can appreciate the beauty of snakes and their role in the ecosystem, but when they take me by surprise in my bedroom, I find my attitude less enlightened. I put one foot gingerly behind the other and started to back out of the room.

Suddenly the snake's tail vibrated like a cicada with Parkinson's. I stopped; quieted my breathing. The snake was between me and the phone on my nightstand; I couldn't reach it. The tail stopped rattling. As beads of perspiration dripped down my cleavage, I inched backwards again. – Copyright 2008 Morgan Hunt

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 released the second book of the series, FOOL ON THE HILL in April 2008 and the third book, BLINDED BY THE LIGHT in September 2008.

Author Interviews:

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

Web site: www.morganhuntbooks.com

2006 winner, Writer's Digest Best Writer's Web Site Award
Site contains reviews, excerpts, chapter names, quotes, photos of settings, puzzles, contests, and author's contact information.