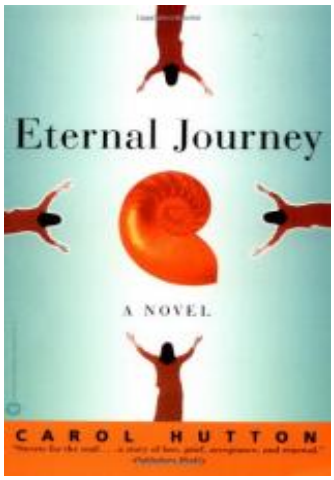
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Eternal Journey

by Carol Hutton



About the Book

Can friendship last forever?

Ever since they could remember, Anna and Beth had been best friends. They relied on each other through careers, marriages, and children nothing could break the bond.

Then cancer changed everything.

When Beth passes away, Anna escapes to Martha's Vineyard to mourn in the solitude of the ocean and the dunes. But though the island seems deserted, she discovers that she is not alone. A persistent stranger appears with a series of shocking revelations and opens doors to the past Anna thought were closed forever. Carried back on the tide of her memories, she begins to tackle the lingering doubts about her own life. The very foundations of her beliefs are about to be shaken leading to a leap of faith that can show Anna the meaning of true friendship and true love.

In this debut novel, Carol Hutton weaves an intensely emotional tale whose joyful, profound message will both lift your heart and speak to your soul.

Discussion Guide

1. Why do you think Anna becomes so desolate after Beth dies? In addition to her profound grief, how does this loss affect Anna's life? Does losing a loved one at mid-life have unique characteristics or do you see grief as grief, no matter what the age of the deceased or bereaved?

2. Why do you think Anna could never "move on" after Kevin dies? Does this strike you as just "soapy fiction" or is there indeed something "eternal & karmic" about a woman's "first " love?

3. Does Anna just have powerful dreams when suffering a loss, as she does when Kevin dies and then Beth, or do you believe in after-death communication?

4. Consider each of the characters that Anna runs into on the island. Do all of these people actually exist or are they figments of Anna's imagination? Do they each serve to help Anna work through her grief? How?

5. Who is "little" Beth? Is she merely a ray of sunshine when Anna is at her lowest point? Or is she more than that? Is there any connection between John's niece and "little" Beth from the bookstore?

6. What do you make of the "Michael" & "Becky" characters? What purpose do these characters serve? Why do you think Anna's relationship with Becky has survived for so long given their differences? What do you make of Michael's "epiphany" at the end of the story?

7. Can you identify with -or imagine---Anna's pain? How did Anna honor her pain? Do we all have to mourn alone "on an island" as Anna did? Is Anna typical or not of how we, in this society, deal with loss and grief?

8. Do you have a close, life-long friendship similar to Anna's and Beth's? If so, does *Eternal Journey* manage to convey the depth of that connection? If not, are you skeptical that such friendship is possible? Is so, why?

9. What feeling are you left with at the end of the story? Spend some time embracing & sharing those emotions. Feel vs. Analyze your reaction to the book. **ADDTIONAL QUESTIONS ON METAPHYSICALCONCEPTS**

10. What do you believe happens when we die? How does grief serve to open the pathway to spirit? Does it?

11. Discuss what is meant by "level of consciousness" both neurologically and spiritually. Where is the "spirit" (or consciousness) when the physical body relies on artificial means for survival? Relate your beliefs/opinions to the events in *Eternal Journey*, particularly Anna's communication with John.

12. Do you believe in metaphysical possibilities? Have you ever had a vivid dream that answered a question for you or foretold of a event not yet experienced?

13. Eternal Journey is rich in Celtic imagery. From a Celtic perspective, Anna goes to the "otherworld" on Martha's Vineyard. List some of the "spiritual" beliefs of these "primitive" people. Reconcile those with death and mourning rituals and practices common in our society today.

14. After reading *Eternal Journey*, how do you feel about the "advice", if not expectation in our society, that after someone we love dies, we need to "move on"?

15. The essential message of *Eternal Journey* is that while those we love may die and leave us in the material world, our "spiritual" connection to them is eternal. Do you believe this or simply see it as a way of consoling those who mourn?

16. In the first few pages of *Eternal Journey* we read Beth's eulogy. In it she tells us that her cancer "brought her to an

awareness that?..we need to live in the moment." Can you contemplate that cancer may be a "gift" in that it serves to "wake" one up? What does "live in the moment" mean to you?

17. Finally, has reading *Eternal Journey* influenced you in any way in your attitude toward death, dying and grief?

Author Bio

CAROL HUTTON, ED.D., is the founder of Hutton Associates, an international consulting practice in management, leadership, and organizational change. ETERNAL JOURNEY is her first novel. She lives in Florida.

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