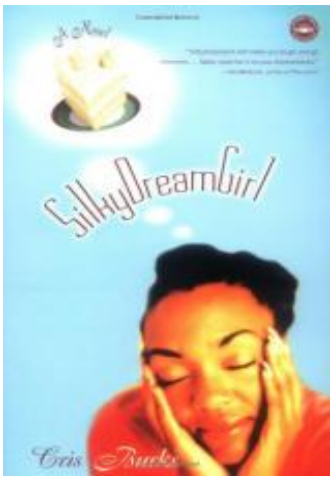
ReadingGroupGuides
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Silkydreamgirl

by Cris Burks



About the Book

Katie Coomers has everyday problems, but she certainly doesn't handle them in an everyday way. Whether she's longing for love or battling her bills, Silkydreamgirl always finds a creative solution. We hope that your reading group finds inspiration in her story. The questions that follow are designed to keep the conversation lively, just the way Katie would want it. While you're at it, why not include a little bit of her favorite wine and music, and maybe some of that lemon meringue pie she likes so much? May your meeting be a delicious one.

Discussion Guide

1. Katie reads Tolstoy and Toni Morrison, follows incredibly complicated recipes, predicts her husband's business failures, and knows how to stretch a budget. Why can't she get ahead? Why isn't a strong mind always enough?

2. At the very end of chapter one, Katie says that Mama Jeffries was "pointing the fork at me like it was a dart." Why is Mama Jeffries so hard on Katie? What are Mama's emotional weapons?

3. Cris Burks uses vivid food metaphors to describe skin tones (Idaho potatoes, peanut butter, fudge, cinnamon). What happens to these subtle distinctions in a chat room? If you were to create an on-line description of yourself, what adjectives would you use?

4. Have you ever had friends who dated a guy like Clarence? What did it take to make them see the light? Why do you suppose Cris Burks decided to begin the novel with Clarence's departure

5. As Katie gets comfortable with chatting, her handle shifts from Stepmom8945 to Silkydreamgirl. What on-line name would apply to different phases in your life?

6. How does Katie's addiction to food differ from her addiction to chatting? How can a fantasy world improve the real world? When does the fantasy world become harmful?

7. Katie has a very maternal side; why is she so turned off by Ben, the sexy single dad? Compare Katie's relationship to her older son, Alex, to her relationship with her stepkids. Compare Katie's parenting style to Mama Jeffries's.

8. Katie's weight loss really gets going when her life is at its emptiest; the boys are in California, she's lost her job, her bank account is nearly empty, she's stopped speaking to her mother, and even the kitchen is bare. What is it about this emptiness that enables her to feel less hungry?

9. Is Matt (the one who's looking for a weekend lover) any less of a dog than Clarence?

10. Katie's on-line buddies provide very real support and friendship for each other, possibly even saving Lori's life. Why did Katie have so much trouble finding that kind of support in her off-line life?

11. How do Katie's on-line loves compare to the ones from her past (the international reporter, the elderly wealthy man, Clarence)?

12. Katie speaks tenderly of her father. What affect did their closeness, and his death, have on her adult relationships with men?

13. Would you have been friends with Donna? What kind of business partner would she have made?

14. Katie remembers taking road trips from Illinois to the south, where some of her relatives lived. In particular, she describes crossing the bridge that meant they'd left the north behind. Why is it important for *SilkyDreamGirl* to be set in Chicago? Would a rural setting or a southern city (such as Atlanta) have been as effective?

15. At the very end of the novel, Katie celebrates a glorious Christmas. What does her new home represent? Describe your dream home, and your version of Noah (Katie's husband number five). What is your personal recipe for success?

Author Bio

Cris Burks earned an M.F.A. in creative writing at Columbia College in Chicago, where she taught fiction writing for several years. Her poetry and short stories have appeared in several literary publications, including *Shooting Star Review* and *Short Fiction by Women*. She lives in Sacramento, California.

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