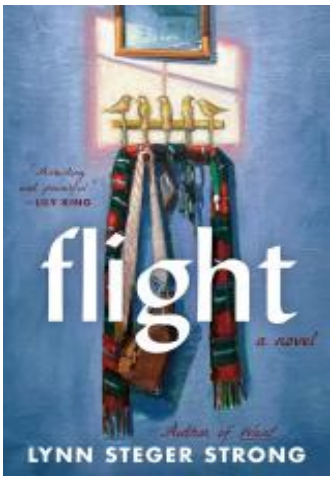
Flight

by Lynn Steger Strong



About the Book

It?s December 22nd, and siblings Henry, Kate and Martin have converged with their spouses on Henry?s house in upstate New York. This is the first Christmas the siblings are without their mother, the first not at their mother?s Florida house. Over the course of the next three days, old resentments and instabilities arise as the siblings, with a gaggle of children afoot, attempt to perform familiar rituals, while also trying to decide what to do with their mother?s house, their sole inheritance. As tensions rise, the whole group is forced to come together unexpectedly when a local mother and daughter need help.

With the urgency and artfulness that cemented her previous novel, WANT, as ?a defining novel of our age? (*Vulture*), Lynn Steger Strong once again turns her attention to the structural and systemic failings that are haunting Americans, but also to the ways in which family, friends and strangers can support each other through the gaps. FLIGHT is a novel of family, ambition, precarity, art and desire, one that forms a powerful next step from a brilliant chronicler of our time.

Discussion Guide

1. How are each couple?s wishes for Helen?s house influenced by their social class status and role as parents?

2. What is the significance of Kate being unofficially tasked with maintaining her mother?s traditions such as setting New Year?s resolutions on December 21st? How does this task relate to her role within their family?

3. How is the theme of home explored throughout FLIGHT? Is it strictly tied to a physical space? How dothe characters conceptualize home differently?

4. Kate and Tess consistently cast judgments on the other?s parenting and life choices. How does their conversation during the search for Maddie illustrate their different embodiments of motherhood and womanhood? Do they eventually

come to respect each other, or do they continue to harbor silent judgments?

5. Tess, coming from a distant and cold family, finds comfort in being welcomed under Helen?s wing. She eventually realizes ?that living with lack does not prepare you for loss. Lack is an amorphous murk, difficult, unpleasant, but loss weighs more, has a shape and texture all its own? (48). How does the author explore the differences between lack and loss? What are these differences?

6. The central role of family in one?s life is a key theme in this novel. How is family defined? How does it transform and expand for each character as the novel progresses?

7. How is Alice?s complicated relationship with motherhood explored through her connection to Maddie? How does she understand her role in Quinn and Maddie?s family?

8. How are starkly different parenting styles characterized throughout the novel? How do the kids reflect or reject their parents? influences?

9. What did you make of the men?s eagerness to devise a thought-out plan to search for Maddie? How do Martin, Josh and Henry each express their masculinity in distinct ways?

10. The two sets of parents, Tess and Martin, and Kate and Josh, have different approaches to sharing domestic labor among themselves. How do Josh?s and Tess? views on domestic work shape their relationships with their partners?

11. Henry spends much of the novel preoccupied with perfecting his bird artwork. How does the motif of birds evolve throughout? Was he satisfied by the reveal at the very end?

Author Bio

Lynn Steger Strong is the author of the novels HOLD STILL, WANT, FLIGHT and THE FLOAT TEST. Her nonfiction has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York*, *The Paris Review*, *Time* and elsewhere. She has taught writing at The Pratt Institute, Fairfield University, Catapult, and Columbia University, and was the Visiting Fiction Writer at Bates College for the 2022-2023 school year. She was born and raised in South Florida.

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