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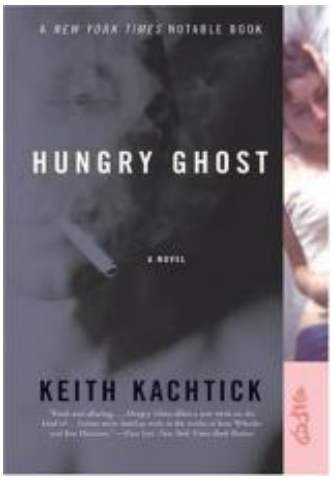
Hungry Ghost: A Novel

by Keith Kachtick



About the Book

Carter Cox is a talented but dissipated freelance photojournalist living in New York City's East Village with his sad dog and bad habits. Though he travels to exotic places taking pictures of models and celebrities, he yearns to do more meaningful work and to mend his womanizing ways. He also wants to put into practice the lessons he learns from his Buddhist betters, but he continues to carry with him his "seduction kit": a chessboard, cigarettes, and a Cormac McCarthy novel.

At a Buddhist retreat, he meets Mia Malone, a beautiful, smart devout Catholic determined to remain a virgin until she is married. Carter falls hard, and Mia nervously agrees to join him on a photo shoot in Morocco. With both of their souls hanging in the balance, they quickly go from the ocean to hot water: crashing their car, getting arrested, running afoul of a sadistic gendarme, and trying to flee the country. Over the course of their adventure, they discover that karma and the human heart work in very mysterious ways.

Discussion Guide

1. In what ways does Carter challenge himself? And does Carter think of himself as a better person for taking on such challenges? Furthermore, how do these tasks change over the course of the novel?

2. What does Christopher see in Carter? What does Carter see in Christopher?

3. Carter says of himself, "What good is any spiritual path ... for someone completely devoid of patience and generosity and love?" Is this a fair assessment? In a novel in which characters are measured by their moral and ethical worth, why would Carter judge himself to be so low on the scale?

4. What do you believe is the significance of Mia Malone having changed her original name?

5. Mia calls Carter a "truth seeker." Do you think this is true, and if so, what sort of truth is Carter seeking? If Mia is mistaken, what exactly is Carter searching for?

6. Mia calls Carter a "truth seeker." Do you think this is true, and if so, what sort of truth is Carter seeking? If Mia is mistaken, what exactly is Carter searching for?

7. In what ways are Carter and Mia similar?

8. What is the importance of dates in the book (i.e., Friday the 13th; Easter Sunday, etc.)?

9. Why do you think the author provides two different endings to the novel?

Author Bio

Keith Kachtick grew up in Texas, attended the Iowa Writers Workshop, and now lives in New York City. He is a senior instructor of the Lineage Project, a non-profit, Dharma-based organization that runs meditation classes in youth prisons in Brooklyn, Harlem, and the Bronx. His writing has appeared in a number of publications, including *Esquire*, *The Missouri Review*, *Texas Monthly*, and the *New York Times Magazine*. **Hungry Ghost** is his first novel. When he started writing the novel, he vowed it would do three things: illustrate the redemptive power of love, bring to life the everyday operations of spiritual practice, and conclude with the words "I do." The same month he began writing this book, he also started teaching Buddhist meditation classes in youth prisons.

Critical Praise

"The pages of **Hungry Ghost** seem to turn themselves, it's that good."

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