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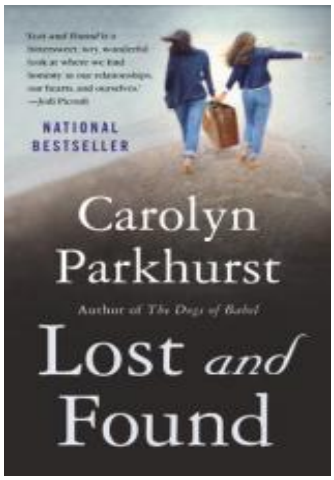
Lost and Found: A Novel

by Carolyn Parkhurst



About the Book

What do a suburban mom, her troubled daughter, divorced brothers, former child stars, born-again Christians, and young millionaires have in common? They have all been selected to compete on LOST AND FOUND, the daring new reality show. In teams of two, they will race across the globe --- from Egypt to England, from Japan to Sweden --- to battle for a million-dollar prize. They must decipher encrypted clues, recover mysterious artifacts, and outwit their opponents to stay in play.

Yet what started as a lark turns deadly serious as the number of players is whittled down, temptations beckon, and the bonds between partners strain and unravel. The question now is not only who will capture the final prize, but at what cost.

Discussion Guide

1. Lost and Found moves between the points of view of several different characters. Which of the characters' backstories were most compelling to you? Which characters did you root for? Were there any characters you didn't want to win?

2. At the beginning of the novel, Cassie says, "They picked us because they think we're this big mother-daughter bomb ticking away with secrets, and they're just waiting for us to explode" (page 18). In what ways are the various contestants pressured to reveal their secrets? Are these revelations ultimately cathartic, or do you think the characters would have been better off if they'd been able to keep their secrets private?

3. The rift between Cassie and Laura seems, at first, beyond repair. How do they find their way to reconciliation? What does Cassie learn about being a daughter--- and being a mother? How does Laura's approach to her relationship with Cassie change?

4. What is the secret Juliet is hiding? How does her interaction with Cassie over the course of the novel change her perspective? Do you think this change will "stick," or will she go back to being her old self?

5. Carolyn Parkhurst once said that Abby and Justin initially were minor characters, but that she then began to think more deeply about them, wondering, "Why would this couple feel they needed to change something so fundamental about themselves as their sexuality?" How was that question answered in the novel? Did you think Abby and Justin's marriage had any chance of succeeding?

6. Justin is the more dogmatic partner of the couple, but he is also the one who gives in to temptation. Is he just a hypocrite, or is there something deeper to his personality? Do you leave the book feeling any sympathy for him?

7. What do you think accounts for the current popularity of reality television? If you watch reality television, which programs do you watch, and what do you find most compelling about them? Did Lost and Found feel like a plausible portrayal of what might happen behind the scenes? And if you don't watch shows of this type, what turns you off about them?

8. What do you think lies in store for the novel's principal characters after the close of the book? Will Cassie be happy in high school? Will Justin learn to accept himself as he is? What will happen to Juliet? How do you think the winners will spend the money?

Author Bio

Carolyn Parkhurst is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the novels THE DOGS OF BABEL, LOST AND FOUND and THE NOBODIES ALBUM. She lives in Washington, DC with her husband and two children.

Critical Praise

"Parkhurst treats the game show as an opportunity for the contestants to decide, as the producer asks of them, 'What have you found?' The answer for readers: heart and wit to spare."

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