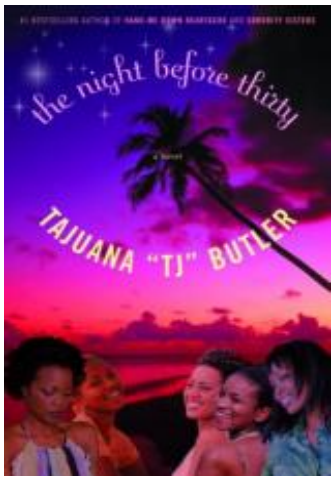
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The Night Before Thirty: A Novel

by Tajuana Butler



About the Book

New, from the number one bestselling author of **Hand-me-down Heartache** and **Sorority Sisters**, a novel about five women on the verge of turning thirty, whose lives are changed forever when they meet through a national radio contest.

At first glance, you couldn't find five women more different.

Catara is a personal shopper in New York who dreams of becoming a fashion designer. Embarrassed by her weight, she lets a lack of self-confidence derail her goals. In Atlanta, Lashawnda has gone from a string of bad relationships with men into one with a woman that doesn't seem much better. Elise is realizing her dream of opening up a gymnastics school in Louisville, Kentucky, but between working and taking care of her grandmother, she can't find much time to nurture herself. Tanya's relationship with her boyfriend is at the breaking point. She's ready to leave Chicago and fast city living to settle down and have a family, but her man isn't on the same page. Alecia lives in Los Angeles and has been getting by on her looks for a long time, but when her (married) boyfriend makes it clear that his wife comes first, she has to realize that beauty fades and she must prepare for her future.

But these women do have something in common?they all share the same birthday and are about to turn thirty. When the number one syndicated black radio show in the country sponsors a Night Before Thirty Getaway Weekend, these women meet, and while their time together is brief, the impact they have upon one another's lives is everlasting.

Discussion Guide

1. Catara remembers a time in her past when she felt beautiful and self-confident, What happened? She claims her weight is at fault, is she using it as an excuse?

2. Although winning the contest allows Catara, Lashawnda, Tanya, Alecia and Elise to escape for a weekend, each

woman spends a lot of time thinking about her own past and future during the trip. Why is this? What is it about the weekend getaway that sparks this kind of thinking? What perspective do they gain about their lives?

3. Louisa asks each of the women to pick a question and share something about their own life to help everyone to get to know each other. Do their stories do more than this? What does each of the women learn from each other? About themselves?

4. Cicely helped turn Lashawnda's life around by giving her the education and ambition she might never have developed on her own. Did Cicely use her? Is Lashawnda really confused about her sexuality?

5. Nearly all the women approach their thirtieth birthday feeling as if they are missing something. What do each of the women want? What is it about turning 30 that makes people re-evaluate their lives?

6. Although Alecia seems to have it all, does she? What is she looking for in her men? What does her relationship with her younger sister reveal about herself?

7. One of the themes of **Night Before Thirty** is finding the strength to believe in yourself and your ability to succeed. What do each of the women realize about themselves during the cruise? How do you think their lives will change?

8. Of all the women, Elise seems to have it all together. She doesn't allow her disappointment with her athletic career to drive her away from gymnastics or into the arms of married man. Where does her strength and leadership come from? Why does she have such a hard time telling Allen how she really feels about him?

9. Tanya repeatedly involves herself with the wrong kind of men. Why? What effect did her experience with Steve have on her choices later on? Can her relationship with Chris succeed? Why does she want to move so badly?

10. What are some of the reasons Louisa chose each of the winners? How are the women alike? How are they different?

Author Bio

Tajuana "TJ" Butler is the author of the novel **Sorority Sisters** and the number one *Essence* magazine bestseller **Hand-me-down Heartache**. She has published a collection of poetry, **Desires of a Woman**, and is a gifted public speaker. She lives in Los Angeles. For more information about Butler and her books, publicity tour, and other news, visit her website at www.tjbutler.com.

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Publication Date: May 13, 2003
Hardcover: 240 pages
Publisher: Villard
ISBN-10: 1400060206
ISBN-13: 9781400060207