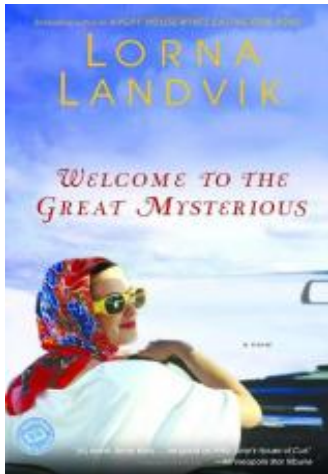


# Welcome to the Great Mysterious

by Lorna Landvik

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## About the Book

Megastar of stage, screen, and television, Geneva Jordan now has a command performance in Minnesota, where she agrees to look after her thirteen-year-old nephew, a boy with Down's syndrome, while his parents take a long-overdue vacation. Though Geneva and her sister, Ann, are as different as night and day ("I being night, of course, dark and dramatic"), Geneva remembers she had a family before she had a star on her door. But so accustomed is she to playing the lead, finding herself a supporting actress in someone else's life is strange and unexplored territory. Then the discovery of an old scrapbook that she and her sister created long ago starts her thinking of things beyond fame. For **The Great Mysterious** is a collection of thoughts and feelings dedicated to answering life's *big* questions?far outside the spotlight's glow. . . .

## Discussion Guide

1. Geneva initially has no intention of traveling to Minnesota to take care of Rich. Why does she change her mind?
2. What do you think would have happened to Geneva if she had decided not to help her sister's family?
3. What has Geneva gained and lost as a result of her successful, high-powered career?
4. As a celebrity, Geneva is fodder for the gossip columns and she is not happy about it. Do you think her complaints are valid? Or is the intrusiveness of the media part of the price of fame and fortune?
5. Geneva's failed first marriage really wounded her. Why does she finally decide to try again?

6. Geneva thinks that Trevor seems relieved by her rejection. Do you think this is really the case? Do you think Trevor could have changed?
7. Has Geneva made the right choice picking the boy in homeroom who would help you with your homework? Do you think the marriage will work?
8. Geneva remembers Conrad as a boy who knew "when it paid to be careful and when it paid not to." How do you distinguish between justifiable fears and those that hold you back and do more harm than good?
9. Geneva and James have both been paralyzed by their fears in some ways. Do you have a fear that you feel has had a detrimental effect on your life?
10. Do you think Rich is aware of Geneva's ambivalent feelings about him? If he is, why do you think he gives her a chance anyway?
11. Rich and Conrad's conditions can make those around them uncomfortable, particularly strangers. Discuss why people can feel so uneasy around those with special needs.
12. Rich and Conrad spend a great deal of time with peers who are not classified as special education. What are the benefits and/or drawbacks of such a setup?
13. Everyone is concerned with how Rich is going to deal with his grief. How do you think he is going to handle it? Were his family and friends right to be concerned?
14. What do you think will happen to Barb and George's marriage? Do you think it can survive their loss?
15. Why did James decide to leave his corporate job and become a mailman? Do you think he has had a nervous breakdown as his ex-wife and parents believe?
16. James and his fellow hockey coach take very different approaches to coaching their players. With which approach do you agree? What should be the mission of youth sports?
17. James says, "faith isn't knowing, it's believing." Discuss the meaning of faith in all its forms.
18. What would your answers be to the "big" questions posed in "The Great Mysterious"? What is true love? What is the meaning of life? What makes you happy?
19. Think of a question you would pose in the "Great Mysterious."
20. Do you have a favorite character or characters in this novel?
21. If you had to give a name to one of your emotions, which would it be and what would you name it?

22. The author mentions that she often attends book clubs. Has your group ever invited an author to attend? If not, is this something you would consider doing?

23. If you had the opportunity to ask the author a question about this novel, what would it be?

24. Why did your group decide to read this book? Are you happy with your choice?

25. What is your group reading next?

## Author Bio

Lorna Landvik is the author of 12 novels, including the bestselling *PATTY JANE'S HOUSE OF CURL*, *ANGRY HOUSEWIVES EATING BON BONS*, *OH MY STARS* and the recently published *LAST CIRCLE OF LOVE*.

Landvik's checkered (but legal) past includes working as a chambermaid in Bavaria, winning a trip to Tahiti as a contestant on "The \$25,000 Pyramid" (MacGyver was her partner), temping at the Playboy Mansion (it was strictly a clerical position), and walking across the country as a member of The Great Peace March.

She has acted in many theatrical productions, including a half dozen shows she conveniently wrote for herself. Her all-improvised show, *PARTY IN THE REC ROOM*, is a local legend, due in no small part to the margaritas she mixes up onstage.

She has one husband and two daughters and lives in the beautiful blue and green state of Minnesota.

## Critical Praise

"[A] winning tale."

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