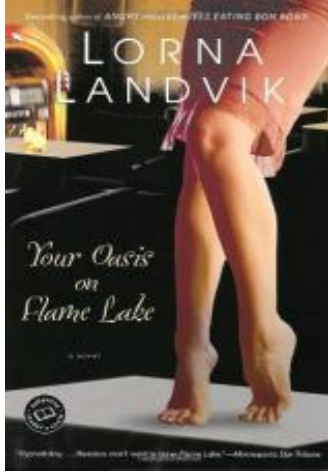


# Your Oasis on Flame Lake

by Lorna Landvik

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## About the Book

Best friends fast approaching forty in the small Minnesota town of Flame Lake, Devera and BiDi were recently voted "Least Changed" at their twentieth high school reunion—a label neither one finds very appealing. For each craves a change in her life: Devera desires a break from her humdrum marital routine; BiDi longs to reconnect with her distant fourteen-year-old daughter (the only girl on the high school hockey team), not to mention jump-start a sex drive stuck in neutral. So when Devera's husband decides to fulfill his longtime dream of opening a nightclub in his basement, *Your Oasis on Flame Lake* arrives not a moment too soon. Nothing fancy, it's just a BYOB joint where you can hang out, sing, dance, tell jokes, and be yourself. But then an unexpected crisis throws both families into chaos, forcing them all to take stock of their lives—and learn the power of forgiveness.

## Discussion Guide

1. Why do you think Landvik has written this book from several perspectives? Do you find it easy to follow the action, or does the multi-narrator format take getting used to?
2. With which characters do you most closely identify? How would you describe each of the main characters in this story?
3. Why do you think the author chose Darcy as the narrator representing the younger generation? Do you think it would have been more effective to have Franny tell her own story rather than having other narrators tell it for her? What do you think the biggest difference is between the two generations presented in this story?

- 4.** There are two people having affairs in this novel: Sergio (with Noreen) and Devera (with Professor Gerhart). How do their affairs differ, and how are they same? Why do you think Landvik has chosen to make one of the affairs benign and the other more harmful? Do you think Sergio or Devera has good reason for having an affair?
- 5.** Other cultures think Americans overreact when it comes to human sexuality and extramarital affairs. Are Americans too straight-laced? When we find out about public figures committing adultery, how much should we care? Do we pay too much attention to the private lives of our public figures?
- 6.** What would you do if you found out a married friend of yours was planning to have an affair? Would you try to talk the friend out of it? Would you tell the spouse?
- 7.** How would you describe the relationships that exist between the children and their parents?
- 8.** Why does Franny choose to tell her stepfather that she's started menstruating rather than her mother? What does this say about Franny's relationship with her mom? Why do you think BiDi is so jealous of Franny's hockey success?
- 9.** BiDi wears form-fitting clothes to flaunt her body and considers flirting a recreational sport. What do you think of her behavior? Is it acceptable to play the "game" the way she does? BiDi also says the people who call her a tease are the ones who are angry because she refuses to play the flirtation game by their rules. Do you think BiDi's right?
- 10.** Do you see BiDi as a shallow character? How does having the baby change her character? Is she heading for a redemption of some kind?
- 11.** What do you think went through Darcy's mind when she saw her mother, crouched under the table, in the midst of a severe panic attack? Devera talks openly and honestly with Darcy about the attack. Should she be so forthcoming about something that so obviously terrifies her daughter?
- 12.** Sergio is determined to find, and even kill, the guy who beat up his stepdaughter. How would you react if someone you loved had been attacked? Is Sergio's eye-for-an-eye philosophy the answer?
- 13.** BiDi is clearly unhappy about having another child. Why doesn't she tell Sergio about her feelings? She goes along with being a mother even though she really doesn't take too well to the role. Are parents like this hurtful to their children in the long run? Do you think parents are able to keep their unhappiness about being parents from their children?
- 14.** Was Franny right to tell her father that she overheard Bidi talking about considering an abortion? Should she have talked to her mother first?
- 15.** Why do you think Franny decides to give up ice hockey? Does this mean that the people who attacked her have won? Do you think she'll take up hockey again?
- 16.** Franny eventually gets a letter of apology from one of the guys who beat her up. She says she accepts the apology but doesn't feel ready to forgive him. How would you react under similar circumstances?
- 17.** Who do you think is responsible for the auto accident? Should Sergio have let the boys go? Was he irresponsible,

considering that he had two other kids in the car with him? What would you have done?

**18.** Was Sergio right to confront Pete Arsgaard? Should he have spoken to Arsgaard's parents first? How would you have handled the situation?

**19.** Dick eventually decides to forgive Devera after finding out about her affair. However, he says, "Either I'm the biggest chump in the world or there should be a St. Dick, patron saint of forgiveness." Do you think Dick is a chump, or suitably forgiving?

## 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

"Hypnotizing . . . Readers won't want to leave Flame Lake."

*?Minneapolis Star Tribune*

"WONDERFUL . . . FUN . . . As lovely as anything you're likely to read . . . A lot of laughs and a little wisdom."

*?Detroit Free Press*

"CAPTIVATING . . . THIS BOOK SHOULD DELIGHT. . . . Her characters are clever and offbeat, like Garrison Keillor's or Fannie Flagg's."

*?Booklist*

"Finely wrought characters populate Landvik's intricately textured tale. . . . Landvik illuminates what is essential, without seeming to, and pushes us to break through hard surfaces to a higher level of understanding. All the while, we

are grandly entertained. . . . She now takes her place next to Maeve Binchy, Jon Hassler, and all the great storytellers who bring you to the heart of their home places. She carries you with especially delicate detail, amazing resonance, humor and brilliant images."

*?Minneapolis Star Tribune*

"Quirky characters are a dime a dozen, but truly believable, lovable ones are not?a fact that makes Landvik's latest slice of American life a genuine pleasure."

*?Kirkus Reviews*

"Written with warmth, wit, and tart dialogue, the book engages big themes (love, friendship, loyalty, betrayal, and the quest for meaning). . . . Landvik's quirky and passionate characters, and her ardent determination to give them dignity, make this a heartwarming story."

*?Publishers Weekly*

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