

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HUNTING HOUSES

Written by Fanny Britt

Translated by Susan Ourion and Christelle Morelli

1. The novel opens with a quote from Rebecca Solnit's *The Encyclopedia of Trouble and Spaciousness*:
"Houses are cluttered with wishes, the invisible furniture on which we keep bruising our shins." What is the "invisible furniture" in protagonist Tessa's home.
2. How did Tessa's profession affect the texture of the narrative? Did you feel like a real estate agent as you read the story, peeking into different lives with Tessa? What would Tessa deduce about you if she were to visit your home?
3. Very early in the novel, Tessa declares: "I'm not that nice a person" (5). Do you agree with her assessment? How did Tessa's personality affect your experience reading the novel? Do you think there is a higher expectation for women, especially mothers, to be "nice," in art and in life?
4. What does the Popsicle-stick bridge in Tessa's car mean to her? Why does she mention it to Francis? (15-23)
5. Why do you think Francis likes having Tessa's name in front of his house? (20)
6. What did you think of Jim? Of Francis? Were you disappointed or relieved by the outcome of his dive bar date with Tessa?
7. What does the novel say about female desire? How does it depict young, obsessive love versus mature longing?
8. Tessa muses:
"I've driven Jim to the airport so many times before a tour, watching the lightness in his step as he walked away from us, like that of a teen tasting freedom. Why wouldn't I be able to walk away just as easily from everything I've known, everything that belongs to me and carries my trace? Aren't I entitled to that sun tomorrow?" (140-141).
Did Tessa's ambivalence about motherhood ring true to you? Did you empathize with her yearning for freedom?
9. The novel ends on a description of an apartment that Tessa sold in the past:
"Through a half-open door, I can see that the new owners have also transformed the whole apartment. Now there's only one closed-off room; the rest is an open floorplan, and you can see through to the back

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wall itself, one big window. Strands of lights zigzag above the backyard. A breeze penetrates the apartment and sets the planter hung on the front balcony to swaying. The clawfoot bathtub is long gone. And the waterfall shower is said to be stunning with its brass fittings, just like the ones in magazines. ‘French expats, so in love,’ I’m told by Julien, the server from the café, who knows everything” (254). Why did Britt choose this final image? Did you find the ending hopeful or bittersweet?