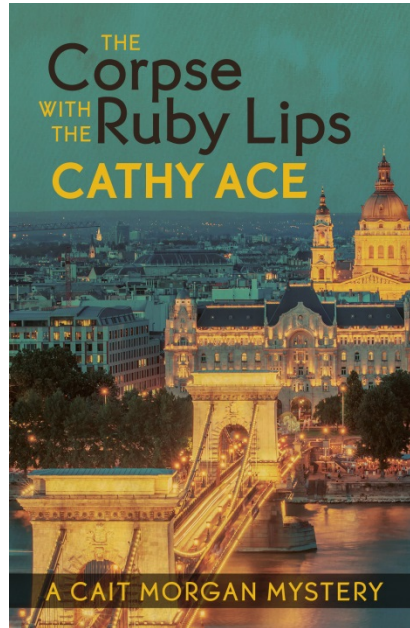


BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

The Corpse with the Ruby Lips

by Cathy Ace



General topics:

1. Which character would you most like to invite to join your Book Club for this meeting? Why?
2. Which character would you cross the street to avoid? Why?
3. If you were casting a movie of this book, who would you cast in which parts?
4. Cait's pretty sure of herself, until she isn't. She's pretty bossy, until she's scared. She's got a photographic memory, but forgets things. She likes to take charge, but turns to Bud for support. She's comfortable with her weight, but tries to joke about it before others can mention it. She loves to smoke, but knows it's bad for her. Why are we humans so contradictory? Are you? How? Why? List some other fictional characters who are defined by contradiction.
5. The world famous "Detection Club", whose members included Agatha Christie, drew up "rules" for mystery novels. One of them was that a clue that could help solve the case must not be concealed from the reader. What were the clues that helped Cait solve the case? How many of them did you spot as you were reading? When did you solve the case?

Relating specifically to “The Corpse with the Ruby Lips”

1. Do any of your group come from Hungary, or have Hungarian heritage? Anyone been to Budapest? What personal stories about Hungary or Budapest can your group share?
2. Of all the Cait Morgan Mysteries, this – although it’s still a closed-circle “whodunit” – is the most akin to a thriller. Do you, as a reader, draw a sharp line between traditional “whodunits” and classic “thrillers”, or do you just enjoy what you read without trying to categorize it?
3. Have you ever watched “*The Third Man*”? “*The Thirty Nine Steps*”? What about all those Hitchcock movies where the hapless lead character is caught up in a series of events over which they have no control, their sense of security disintegrating about them? In what ways is this book similar to them? How does it differ?
4. Do you think that if a woman wears ruby-red lipstick it “says something about the sort of woman she is”? If so, what, and why?
5. In this book Cait is alone in Budapest, without Bud’s steadying influence. Having been single until her late-forties, and having now been married to her beloved for almost a year, she falls back into her “old ways”, and finds they don’t comfort or satisfy her as they used to. Have you been separated from a significant other for a period of time, and felt loneliness impacting you? What might have suggested to an observer you weren’t coping as well as you hoped?
6. Cait’s usually highly judgmental, and “reads” people. In this book, those characteristics seem to have deserted her. For much of her life she’s “kept people out” as a way to cope with the scars that haven’t healed since her relationship with Angus. In this book she’s letting people “in”. Not used to self-reflection – or with the idea she should judge herself in the same way she judges others – Cait’s having to admit she’s a human being! Do you find your level of self-reflection has changed with the years, or with life-events? What’s a “healthy” amount of self-judgement...and what’s unhealthy?
7. In this book the past shows us it has long arms, and reaches out to touch lives in the present day. This is the case not just for the family Cait gets to know, but for the families of those who were informants during the Communist years in Hungary. Of course, this being a murder mystery, the past affects present-day lives in a less than pleasant way...would you like to share some examples of how it’s reached you?
8. Why not have some Hungarian food when you meet? At least all sing the Blue Danube Waltz!

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Thanks for choosing to read this book!