



Discussion Questions

Hot in Here

by Susan Lyons

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Thanks so much for reading *Hot in Here*. I hope you enjoyed it, and I'd love to hear from you. I'm happy to provide bookmarks and autographed bookplates; just send me your name and address. Please visit my website for info on other titles, insights into how each book came about, excerpts, a monthly contest, and other good stuff.

Now settle back, kick off your shoes, and make sure you've got a nice glass of wine, a chocolate martini, a latté or a cup of tea, and let's reflect on the book.

1. *A warm-up question.* How do you feel about firefighters? I ran a poll on my website (I have a monthly opinion poll contest) and asked "what's the sexiest occupation for a guy?" The majority of women said firefighters. What's your opinion? What makes an occupation sexy, or heroic?
2. *Will Scott remain a firefighter?* He had a hard time dealing with the death of a child. Is he too soft for the job? Jenny got upset when she comforted him – and if he remains a firefighter there will be many other times like that. Her family worries that his occupation is dangerous and he may be hurt or killed. If he stays a firefighter, will Jenny be able to deal with the fears and stresses? Should he give up the job and find something safer and less emotionally wrenching? How do you feel about dating someone in a dangerous occupation? About having them come home in tears because someone died on their watch?
3. *Seduce that firefighter!* When Jenny sees Scott on stage, she's really turned on by him and decides to do her best to seduce him. She's never even met the man, yet she wants to have sex with him. Is that okay? Morally wrong or questionable? Dangerous? Have you ever done anything like that? Would you?
4. *Jenny leads two lives.* At home she plays the role of respectful Chinese daughter. Outside the home she's a modern Western woman – and she doesn't tell her family what she's doing if her actions violate their values. Parents and children often have different values. What do you think of the way she's been handling things? In what areas do you and your parents (or you and your children) differ, and how do you deal with those differences?
5. *Necessary lies?* Jenny lies to her parents. She has justifications, and her friend Rina supports her. They say, sometimes your parents put you in a position where the best course of action is to lie – and lying is more respectful than confrontation. What do you think about that? Is it ever okay, or even a good thing, to lie to another person? If you were Jenny's parents, would you rather she hid her secret life or told you what she was doing – and then you'd have to deal with it?
6. *What are the families trying to achieve?* Both Jenny's and Scott's families have strong ideas about what their children should do. Are they just being overly controlling? Do they really care about their children's welfare? Or about their happiness? What are your parents like with you? If you have kids, how do you act with them, and what do you want for them?
7. *Who's right?* What do you think of Jenny's family's values? Can you see a role for tradition in a modern young woman's life? Should two generations make compromises and try to meet in the middle?

8. *Don't fix me up.* Arranged dates and arranged marriages are practiced in many cultures. Have you had any experience with them, or have your friends? What do you think of the idea? What if it's friends, rather than parents, who try to fix you up? Where do you think is the best place to meet prospective mates?
9. *Martin.* Jenny's old friend Martin is gay, and that would be a real problem for his traditional Chinese family. Do you think he should be honest with them, and deal with the consequences? How do you feel about the fake-dating relationship he and Jenny set up? What's Martin's role in the book?
10. *Would Jenny ever give in?* Before she gets seriously involved with Scott, Jenny thinks that maybe eventually she will marry a Chinese man her family approves of. Do you think she'd ever have done that if she hadn't met Scott? How would it have worked out? What if she and Martin got married?
11. *No PDAs.* Jenny doesn't want to be seen in public with Scott. She won't kiss him or even hold his hand if someone might see them. She's right that many Chinese people avoid physical expressions of affection, even at home, but for her it's more about fear of discovery. Do you think she goes overboard with this? Can you relate to her concern? Have you ever had a lover or friend you didn't want to go out in public with?
12. *Scott's determined.* He's already defied his family by choosing to be a firefighter rather than a farmer. He knows his parents and grandparents don't want him dating a Chinese-Canadian woman, but he believes that, if he cares about someone, his family darned well ought to accept her. What do you think of his approach? When is it acceptable, or even a good thing, to stand up to your family? Do you think Scott's approach is going to work, and will his family come to accept Jenny in the long run?
13. *Scott's sister.* Lizzie has problems with her parents too. What's her dilemma and how is it similar to Jenny's? Do you think she's ever going to get her parents to accept her desire to take over the farm?
14. *Who should Jenny choose?* Would she be better off with one of the nice Chinese guys her family is trying to fix her up with, or with Scott? Why? Will her family ever come to accept Scott?
15. *Fantasy Rules.* Jenny likes acting out sexual fantasies with Scott. At a certain point, he wants the two of them to just be themselves in bed, not play a role. Why do you think Jenny's so fond of her Fantasy Rules? And why does Scott want to break them?
16. *The fantasies.* Which one did you like best, and why? Did any of them trouble you – and, if so, why? Have you acted out any of your own or a partner's fantasies? How did that work out for each of you? Do you want to try any of the things Jenny and Scott did?
17. *The critical decision.* When Scott shows up at the hospital, Jenny has a choice: to pretend he's just an acquaintance or to acknowledge their relationship. What do you think guides her decision? Do you think she did the right thing? In her position, would you make the same decision? Was there a point earlier in the book where you believed she'd already lost her heart to Scott? If so, when?
18. *The Awesome Foursome.* The four girlfriends are a big part of this book, and each friend will have her own book. Do friends play a major role in your life? Do you think a woman needs a support network like the Foursome? Or do the other girls just confuse or attempt to control Jenny? Do men need friends too?
19. *Champagne Rules?* If you read my previous book, *Champagne Rules*, you'll know the story of Suzanne's and Jaxon's romance. Did you see parallels between Jenny and Suzanne, and how their relationships developed?
20. *A "literary" question.* Do you like the general structure of the book – with girlfriend scenes, scenes with family and Martin, and scenes with Jenny and Scott? Did the balance work for you, or would you rather have seen more or less of one component?

I'd love to hear your thoughts on some of these questions and issues!