



The Hunt Club

Bret Lott

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In this lyrically written, hauntingly seductive novel, Bret Lott brings to life the beauty and flavor of the mist-covered swamps and backlands of South Carolina's Lowcountry in a story that is both mystery and rite of passage.

At fifteen, Huger ("you say it YOU-gee") Dillard already knows a great deal about the ways of the world--or so he thinks. He may not have a father, but with the guidance of his blind "Unc," Leland, and weekends spent at the Hunt Club--a tract of woods and swamp belonging to his family--Huger knows all about the land and the habits of its wildlife, from deer to the pompous Charleston doctors and lawyers who come to hunt them. But nothing can prepare him for the dark events that begin to unfold when he and Unc stumble upon the body of a well-to-do Charleston regular on their land.

Who wanted him dead? And why is the Hunt Club suddenly at the heart of a dark secret worth killing for? Caught in a treacherous labyrinth that stretches deep into the past, Huger and everyone he loves are about to discover painful truths that will irrevocably change them; truths that will shatter a young boy's innocence and test him as a man.

The Hunt Club Details

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From Reader Review The Hunt Club for online ebook

Will Byrnes says

Set in the land around Charleston, South Carolina, this tale, not written by Pat Conroy, tells of a young (15) lad, Huger, and his blind uncle, Leland. "Unc" is the owner of a significant tract of land, used for generations as a hunt club, a place where the wealthy of Charleston, those who live "South of Broad," come to drive pickups into the woods and shoot at animals that have been scared up by the locals. Think Dick Cheney and crew driving from stop to stop to jump out of their cars to take aim at quail. But it's tough to maintain an old tradition when a body turns up minus its head and the skin on his hands.

There are several mysteries to be figured out here. Why was the topless fellow killed? And by whom? Who is it who is trying to get Leland to sell his land? Why did Huger's father leave? What is the real story behind the fire that took Leland's wife and his eyesight?

The Hunt Club is a fast, engaging read, with nicely drawn primary characters and a passel of baddies in sundry shades of greed, from base acquisitiveness to sociopathic predation. Lott has a bit of fun, as well, identifying all the characters by the cars they drive. Don't expect great literature here. But The Hunt Club is a pleasant way to pass a few hours.

Jowell L. says

Bret Lott's The Hunt Club writes about Huger Dillard, a fifteen year old boy, and his development from childhood to facing the darkness of the outside world. The mystery begins as a mutilated body is discovered in Huger's Uncle's hunting club. They are then off to search for the criminal and the notions behind their actions. Sound interesting? Well, it doesn't last long. After one or two pages of somewhat engaging story-telling, the novel completely loses its momentum as the sluggish process of finding the murderer becomes a pathway of boredom.

In scenarios where there are supposedly exciting car rides or a chase on just two feet, the descriptions of the setting were excessively detailed and unnecessary to the plot, causing the tension to die down. For example, during a car chase scene, the car stops to describe that "Across from us was a Piggly Wiggly, and a Phar-Mor Drugs, and a Piece Goods store, a video store, a dry cleaner's." The entire book is packed with these needless details and is incredibly distracting to the plot itself. By the end of each chapter, you realize how tedious it was to read because if it was cut down to the parts that actually contributed to the plot, it would be half a page long.

I do, though, appreciate how Lott attempted to clearly depict the thought process of Huger, since it was written in first person. Therefore, the wording of his thoughts was in one word sentences like they were coming straight from his mind, like "But here. Here there were books. Everywhere." Also, there would be arbitrary flashbacks as Huger recalls something from the past, similar to how everyday people suddenly remember past occurrences. This way, the reader can relate to the emotions felt by Huger. However, this, again, often diverts our attention away from the plotline, so I personally found it counter effective.

Overall, I still believe that after the introduction, it took all the way to the ending for the novel to become at

least half-way suspenseful. Everything, between the first encounter with the mystery and solving it, was bland and slow. It was like having a killer chase a victim into a dark alley, but then having to stop and chit-chat for a couple hours until he finally knifes the guy. The entire way through, I just wanted to skip to the end. In short, *The Hunt Club* is 10 pages of a decent story and 228 pages of banal filler.

Barbara Burd says

I recently attended a reading by Bret Lott and one of the books he chose was *The Hunt Club*, saying that he chose this in honor of librarians because the book has been challenged and librarians are the stalwarts of freedom to read. I'm not a big mystery reader, but I had read Lott's more familiar book *Jewel* several years ago and really enjoyed his lyrical style of writing. Living in South Carolina, I am familiar with the Charleston area and this added significantly to my enjoyment of the book. Also, as a recent transplant from the north, I am interested in the history and especially the stories of the rice plantations and the Gullah culture. Lott's impressive understanding of this unique culture adds immensely to the story.

The book starts with a murder and rapidly moves through a fantastical story of greed, corruption, adultery, suicide, and other "sins" transposed against love, commitment, and dedication to family. At times I felt like I was on a wild ride across the landscape of Charleston and it's environs.

Lott writes beautifully and this is the greatest strength of the book. For those of us who appreciate the fluidity of the written word, this book offers much. His language is precise and deliberate--there are no superfluous passages; all have meaning. I was impressed by how Lott conveyed the culture of Charleston, especially the disparities between the classes, which was even more pronounced than the differences between the races. His writing is finely nuanced and for those like myself who are intrigued by the history and culture of the area, this book provides insight and understanding.

This book is a good read for mystery fans, for those interested in Southern culture, and for those who just want a good read to carry to the beach or take out on the patio on lazy southern afternoons.

I imagine it would also appeal to young adults, who would identify with the protagonist in this coming of age novel.

Brendan L says

The Hunt Club. The protagonist is on a mystery hunt, finds out her mother has been abducted discovered and illegal business in their own backyard. General plot of the story. The plot at the beginning started off great with the mystery of a dead member of the Hungry Neck Hunt Club. After a while, the plot twists between who is the villain and the motives for the characters get scrambled and become very dull.

The Novel starts with the mystery of a murdered husband a great start to a mystery book albeit very generic in a way. This leads into him and his "Unc" (***SPOILER***: turns out not to be his uncle) to find out the truth to who killed this man. This leads into another close person's life at risk. After this chase, the villain reveals their plan. At first, seemed like a good plot twist of the good cop turning out to be the villain of the story. Disappointingly, Lott overused this technique and it became obvious on what would happen next.

In addition to the same plot techniques, the characters' names were indifferent and hard to recall, Reynold, Ravenel, Thigpen, Simons, and Dillard, all rednecks through the novel description which there was no description aside from "doctors, lawyers and such". Near the end, it became difficult to recall the differences

between these characters and even with the actions they have done. Huger (“Pronounced “YOU-gee””) was the protagonist at the age of 15. ***SPOILERS***Finding out the truth about his real father and the ending was quite disappointing since it took so many years before he found out about this dark family secret.
END SPOILERS

On the search to find people, Bret Lott had described the roads, stores, and intersections Huger and Unc travelled on in great detail. This in my opinion, made me lose focus on the actual plot of the story and focus on the imagery created instead of the actions of the characters.

Overall, not such a good read after the halfway point with disappointing and obvious plot turns and twists. Haven’t read many books and this book requires a great amount of focus just to understand.

Kim says

I don’t know why I kept reading this book, but now that I’ve finished it maybe someone else won’t have to? Hated the names; found the great mystery not very compelling; didn’t buy the greedy motive unveiled at the end that even the characters themselves describe as “too predictable.” I really only liked the scene where two characters suddenly kiss to throw off anyone possibly in pursuit, because it was such a surprise.

bookczuk says

Mixed feelings about this one-- There were parts that pulled me right in, but then I'd find myself getting distracted by the location- instead of my beloved lowcountry enhancing the novel for me, I found myself trying to think of exactly where the author was describing, or trying to figure out if an intersection or street or storefront really existed. Very disconcerting. And the whole business with the medical university bothered me-- maybe because I worked for 20 years at The Medical University, and this was a bit too dark and sinister for most of the folks I knew. At times the plot got a bit convoluted too, or it could have just been that the heat of a Charleston summer dulled my brain.

But all in all, a nice way to spend a day reading, even if I wondered why Huger took so long to figure out the deep, dark secret of his family. But then again, he was only 15 and I have 35 years of cynicism on him!

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Huger Dillard is no ordinary 15-year-old from the Low Country of South Carolina. He may not have a father to help him grow up, but day-to-day guiding of his blind Uncle Leland - Unc, for short - and weekends spent at the Hunt Club have made him an expert on the habits of deer, the pompous attorneys and doctors of nearby Charleston, and the ways of the world. But with Unc's discovery of a mutilated body, Huger suddenly learns that he is expert at nothing - least of all his own life. Everything he knows and every-one he loves - Unc, his mother, his foundering teenage romance - is at risk, and Huger must use every ounce of resourcefulness and bravery to stay alive and protect what he believes in. Yet, when he finally discovers precisely what happened that Saturday morning, there is still one more secret to uncover, this one too dark, too deep, for him to even imagine.

wally says

finished this one this morning, 7:34, sept 24th 2016 good story three stars i liked it. though some of the story-line did not make sense...the whys and there wherefores the so forths and the so ons. overall, enjoyed the writing. but ultimately i began to question, would this happen? why did that happen? what is the motivation, other than greed? does greed explain it all? how'd thigpen know that? how could he know that? that sort of thing. i imagine if you read along, as i did, clueless, since that seems to be the intent, as clueless as you-gee, you can enjoy the story. don't question things too heavily and when all is said and done, so be it. onward and upward.

Julieb says

Good beach read--edge of my seat!!

Brian Tucker says

Setting was 5. Plot was 3. Dialogue was 3. Largely due to the meandering nature of the fiction. Wanted to like it more. Finished it though.

Katie Powell says

If Bret Lott's *The Hunt Club* were a movie, Nicolas Cage would be its star. Overflowing with murders, chase scenes, illicit lovers, and the discovery of national treasures, I kept picturing Cage's sallow face and receding hairline, melodramatically windswept, charging across the pages of *The Hunt Club* as Leland Dillard ('Unc') in this 1998 novel. This is not a compliment.

Leland Dillard is the strong and silent type. He's blind (he lost his sight diving into a burning house to save his dying wife), but he's no invalid. He and his 15 year-old nephew Huger ('YOU-gee') are the proprietors of a backwoods hunting club on the banks of the Ashepoo River in South Carolina.

On page two of the story, Leland smells blood and finds a brutally murdered body lying between hunting stands 17 and 18. The rest of the book is a who-done-it? narrated by Huger.

This is my second reading of *The Hunt Club*. I read it my senior year in college (I found a plane ticket stub dated December 2005 wedged in the back pages to prove it). At the time, I was studying Bret Lott to see what difference a writer's belief in Christ makes to his (or her) craft. Now I remember that I had to leave *The Hunt Club* out of my study.

Although Lott has 1 Timothy 5:24 printed before the title page ("The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them"), there are just far too many f-bombs and ruthless acts of violence to enjoy this book as a Believer.

Christian convictions aside, the plot is also too fast and the characters are, consequently, unfinished, as if Lott wanted Leland and Huger to be more complex human beings, but lost control and let the need-for-speed and gut-gripping action mow them down.

Bret Lott is a talented writer. I've actually read everything he's written to date. I just don't think suspense writing is his genre. Mr. Lott, take my humble advice... leave the gun slinging and chase scenes to Nicolas Cage and stick to the insightful, people-based stories you do best.

Nefty123 says

Didn't expect this. I will be checking for other books of this author.

Alex Yu says

The Hunt Club by Bret Lott is a beautifully-written novel that follows a young boy's journey into adulthood. Bret Lott has successfully combined both a very thrilling and exciting plotline with deep questions and issues that the protagonist, Huger Dillard, learns of throughout his journey.

Huger is a 15-year-old boy who learns many things about the nature of the world and the secrets, lies and bad intentions that it's overfilled with, through a trilling and fast-paced chase through Hungry Neck, a large piece of land near Charleston, North Carolina, with, as Mr. Lott writes, "wetlands in black pools littered with leaves" and "thick black wall[s:] of pine and oak and birch". The story starts off with a very vivid scene of the dead body of Charles Middleton Simons, with "the head of it pretty much gone [and:] the hands skinned", as Mr. Lott writes. The situation quickly spirals out of control as Huger and his "Unc" discover that the whole ordeal may not just be about something as simple as murder.

The great thing about the story is that we can follow Huger's change as a person from the kid who thinks that, as written by Mr. Lott, "there's nothing much [he's:] scared of" to a responsible and new person who "saw things" and "knew the difference between sin and love [and that:] both could be one and the same". We can easily relate to the young boy's emotions and feelings as we follow his path to growing independence.

Mr. Lott also raises interesting questions and ideas in his novel. Questions like "*Who will watch the watchers?*" and ideas regarding the blur between love and sin makes us think about our own lives and how, perhaps, those who we love and care about may also be hiding something as deep and as dark as a bottomless ocean trench.

Overall, *The Hunt Club* is such a fantastic read not only because of the pace, as fast as a horse galloping through the midnight woods, but also because of the deep elements addressed in the storyline and the intriguing language used by Mr. Lott to describe the beautiful scenery and settings.

However, I must say, be warned. There's no going back after page one, as both Huger *and* the reader will be pulled and dragged deeper and deeper into the dark, shadowed forests of Hungry Neck...

Andy Plonka says

More of a character study than a mystery, it indicates the importance of family.

Lisa says

Well written. The characters and story captured me. This was partially because it takes place in Charleston and incorporated recent local history into the plot. The descriptions of living in the low country back woods rang true. I read it because it was on a list of books that parents wanted banned from the local schools.

Derek says

The Hunt Club

The suspenseful book of The Hunt Club, written by Bret Lott is exquisitely crafted and has a very imaginative plotline. The book first introduces you with the character Huger Dillard, a fifteen year old boy, who has a complex family, living sometimes at his blind Uncle Leland's hunt club or at his mom's house. The emotionally gripping novel starts with the encounter of a defaced and skinned corpse in the grassland of the Hungry Neck hunt club. The plot instantaneously starts to mesh a young boy's life to the real outside world. Huger gets caught up with the mysterious Uncle Leland's past and gets engulfed into the truth and history of the Hunt Club. What secrets of Leland's past can Huger uncover and will this hurt their relationship between the two?

Bret Lott describes the plot very well and you can feel the pace of the book start to increase. Lott portrays the character as moving and intricate beings and they are all full of emotion. Brett builds fast moving images of the scenes and detailed imagery that lets you visualize what the characters' sensation in the fictitious world is.

"He had on his sunglasses, that Braves cap he wears. He had on the same khaki shirt and pants as always, the same green suspenders..." (P6)

However the author sometimes puts too much emphasis on the details and the reader gets lost and wanders. This is from experience as i was reading the book.

The book is a combination of action, adventure and thriller. This is an interesting element of the novel because as an action part of the novel ends, an adventurous part of the novel starts to begin. For example, midway through the book, it explains the part where Huger finds who the mysterious people who capture his mom. Right when the mysterious part ended, an adventurous part started.

Brett Lott stylishly wrote the book and is fit for readers who love electrifying plots and classy characters.
