



## Hissy Fit

By Mary Kay Andrews  
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### Introduction

When high-end interior designer Keeley Murdock catches her fianc'e and her maid of honor cavorting in flagrante delicto during the rehearsal dinner, she pitches a hissy fit never before seen within the walls of the Oconee Hills Country Club. Golf trophies, wineglasses, Limoges snuffboxes, and a disloyal hussy's red thong panties all become lethal projectiles as Keeley furiously refuses to accept the notion that "boys will be boys" and calls off the wedding.

Unfortunately, her former fianc'e A.J. Jernigan's wealthy banking family believes she humiliated them, and gets revenge immediately by revoking her father's club membership and pressuring her design clients into renegeing on projects. As Keeley bravely tries to hold her head high in Madison, Georgia, a place where the "kudzu telegraph" transmits gossip to every corner of the town, a red-headed stranger in a vintage yellow Cadillac drives up to rescue Keeley's business, and possibly, her broken

heart.

Will Mahoney, the freckled, wildly successful, brand-new owner of the failing local bra plant, hires Keeley to redo the derelict antebellum mansion he's bought in an attempt to woo the woman of his dreams -- a woman he's never met. Despite her initial disdain for the pushy "bra boy," a rapidly thinning client roster forces Keeley to begrudgingly accept the insane task.

As Keeley throws herself into restoring the beautiful old house, small-town secrets begin to surface, including one connecting the adulterous ways of the Jernigan men to her own mother's disappearance many years ago. Adultery and antiques, revenge and sleuthing, have never been as much fun as with Mary Kay Andrews at the helm.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Consider Keeley's hissy fit at the rehearsal dinner. Do you think she was justified in expressing her anger? What did that hissy fit, and Keeley's inability to tolerate betrayal and hypocrisy reveal about her character?
2. What could be said about the other Jernigan women, who never "said anything, 'cause they didn't want to cause a stink?"
3. When Gloria tells Keeley the Jernigan men "have always gotten away with murder ... because everybody looks the other way," does it seem likely that the Jernigans' vendetta against Keeley was really about the moral fiber she displayed in not looking away?
4. After meeting Stephanie Scofield, Keeley's thoughts turn to a time when, at "another famous Georgia plantation house, a woman with a dilemma turned to interior design." Is it possible to compare Keeley Rae Murdock to Scarlett O'Hara? What traits do they appear to have in common? In what ways has Georgia changed, from Scarlett's time to Keeley's? In what ways has the South remained the same? What other flourishes does the author add in depicting an accurate portrayal of small-town living?
5. Consider Stephanie's hissy fit when her fountain was being dismantled, and Keeley's smaller hissy fit when she tells Will Mahoney that Stephanie is "turning this place into her own personal Versailles. That woman is a fraud" before dumping her invoices over his head. How does Stephanie's behavior reveal the character beneath the elegant fa'ade? How is her tantrum different from Keeley's? Do you think an essential component of a proper hissy fit is the sort of blazing honesty that usually has no place in polite society?
6. Do you agree with Austin when he says Keeley has "more issues than the National Geographic?" What emotions roil beneath the surface of the Murdocks' easygoing camaraderie?
7. Besides Gloria, are there other women Keeley regarded as mother figures? How did her mother's disappearance affect Keeley's sense of security and permanence?
8. Does it seem likely that Keeley's love of antiques, of home design and decorating, are emblematic of her desire to create a perfect, lasting sense of home, an antidote to her feelings of abandonment? What can be inferred from their family home, unchanged in the twenty-five years since her mother left? Do you believe that one's surroundings reflect one's state of mind?
9. At Hard Labor Creek Park, where Keeley and her father discuss her mother's disappearance for the first time, her father says, "People keeps things to themselves ... . Sometimes, when things aren't good, instead of saying something, getting things stirred up, they just keep things to themselves, and keep going along, to get along. But that's all wrong." Why do you think it took them so long to talk about Jeanine's disappearance? How do her father's words reiterate a recurring theme in *Hissy Fit*?
10. In this small town where everyone has known Keeley her entire life, do you find it shocking that so many people are hiding secrets? In her quest to uncover the truth, does Keeley also begin to understand her mother?
11. When Drew and A.J. Jernigan come across Keeley on the Bascombe property, does A.J.'s reaction to the truth redeem him? What do you think of Keeley's father's assessment -- "messing about with your best friend, when you're getting married the next day, that's more

than just a mistake. That's a character flaw. A big one if you ask me?" How is Will a better partner for Keeley? Can you identify the moments, the clues that indicate their changing feelings for each other?

12. Towards the conclusion of *Hissy Fit*, Keeley receives a framed photograph of her mother from Sonya Warick. Do you think her bitterness is justified when she says, "and I'm supposed to forgive and forget, is that it"? How does her Aunt Gloria respond? What is Gloria referring to, when she says there may be "poetic justice" for Jeanine after all? Do you think that is enough?