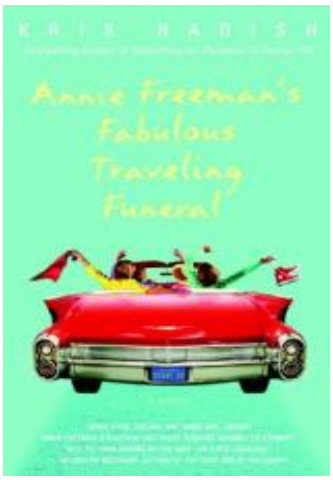
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Annie Freeman's Fabulous Traveling Funeral

by Kris Radish



About the Book

For Katherine Givens and the four women about to become her best friends, the adventure begins with a UPS package. Inside is a pair of red sneakers filled with ashes and a note that will forever change their lives. Katherine's oldest and dearest friend, the irrepressible Annie Freeman, left one final request--a traveling funeral--and she wants the most important women in her life as "pallbearers."

From Sonoma to Manhattan, Katherine, Laura, Rebecca, Jill, and Marie will carry Annie's ashes to the special places in her life. At every stop there's a surprise encounter and a small miracle waiting, and as they whoop it up across the country, attracting interest wherever they go, they share their deepest secrets--tales of broken hearts and second chances, missed opportunities and new beginnings. And as they grieve over what they've lost, they discover how much is still possible if only they can unravel the secret Annie left them....

Discussion Guide

1. **Annie Freeman's Fabulous Traveling Funeral** opens with the dilemma of Katherine's disintegrating Bali bra. What does this situation tell us about her personality? In what way does it set the perfect tone? What enables the UPS driver to be so empathetic?

2. What were your first impressions of Annie G. Freeman after reading her obituary? How did you envision her by the end of the novel? What made her such a tireless champion for so many overlooked realms of humanity?

3. What did Annie mean in her instructions when she wrote, "Honor me now and you will honor yourselves"?

4. Did Annie's friendship with Katherine change very much from the time they were teenagers? How did "Katie" respond to Annie's suicide attempt? What were the greatest comforts they gave to each other over the years?

5. When Annie becomes Jill's protégé in Chapter Five, she says that she does not want to be challenged irresponsibly or tricked, and "I don't want to have to stand on my head to get a promotion." She also asks to be mentored and trained. What would it take to make such on-the-job negotiations the norm, full of candor and benevolence?

6. What transformations does Laura make during the traveling funeral? What is the significance of her prophetic feelings? Why was she the ideal lifeline for Annie on the night she was attacked?

7. What do Annie and Rebecca teach each other about control? What was at the heart of their initial struggle to get along as neighbors?

8. In what way is Marie distinct from the other women? What is the source of the special traits that make her a gifted hospice worker? What was the effect of her intangible presence on the trip, by cell phone and memory?

9. What do all of Annie's friends have in common? How does the theme of rescue and healing play out in their traveling funeral? What variations did you notice in the thoughts and responses recorded in the journal?

10. Discuss the men in Annie's life, ranging from John and their sons to the mysterious ex-husband who observes them in Manhattan. How was she able to balance love and independence? How would you characterize her life: bittersweet? Exhilarating?

11. Compare each of the destinations on Annie's itinerary. How do the landscapes form a complete portrait of her? What aspects of her life are captured by the various "guides" encountered on the trip?

12. Do you agree with the airport anthropologist's theory that the death of a loved one can restore other relationships in our lives? How have your friends, family, and community traditionally responded to grief? Why does the traveling funeral resonate with so many strangers near the end of their journey?

13. Discuss Balinda's presence. What is the role of spontaneity and improvisation in the traveling funeral? How do Balinda's plans for her mother convey the new perspective rippling throughout the travelers?

14. In Chapter Twenty-eight, Annie's friends express their anger--toward her, toward her death, and over the end of their beautiful time together. What healing comes from this anger?

15. If you were to plan your own traveling funeral, who would your "pallbearers" be? What places would you want them to visit together? What untold chapters of your life would you like them to discover along the way?

16. What common threads does **Annie Freeman's Fabulous Traveling Funeral** share with Kris Radish's previous novels? What makes each book's circle of friends unique?

Author Bio

Kris Radish is the author of six books. Her Bantam Dell novels THE ELEGANT GATHERING OF WHITE SNOWS, DANCING NAKED AT THE EDGE OF DAWN and ANNIE FREEMAN'S FABULOUS TRAVELING FUNERAL have been on the bestseller and Book Sense 76 Selection lists. She also writes two weekly nationally syndicated columns.

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