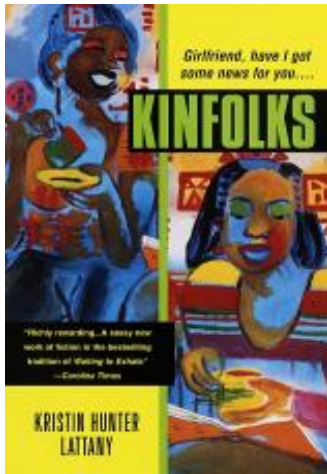


# Kinfolks

by Jane Haddem

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## About the Book

Now swinging on the far side of forty, best friends Patrice Barber and Cherry Hopkins came of age in the sixties, becoming single mothers by choice. So who would have dreamed that these two ex-revolutionaries would find themselves trying to compose a la-de-dah wedding invitation for their soon-to-be-married children?

But a shattering truth from their radical past is about to rear its head and alter the course of their lives, forcing Patrice and Cherry to hit the road on an urgent mission of forgiveness and compassion, of making amends and letting go. . .

## Discussion Guide

1. There's a saying, "It's a wise child that knows its own father." What might be some of the meanings in that saying?
2. Why might it be important to know your father--who he is, what he is like, some facts about him? Why was it important for the young people in this novel?
3. What about health? If you found out, for instance, that your father had diabetes, would you get checked? Would you cut down on sweets in your diet? If he had high blood pressure, would you cut down on salt? Would you want your children to know about their father's conditions and do these things?
4. Are family reunions a good idea? Have you ever been to one? Did it live up to your expectations or did it disappoint you? What do you think people should try to accomplish at family reunions? Why is family so important?
5. If you were a mother, would you be hurt if your children made a big fuss over their father and took you for granted, as the young people did in this book? Why do you think that happened?

6. Saint and Aisha seem to adjust rather quickly to the fact that they are brother and sister. Do you think this easy adjustment is realistic? How would you feel if the same thing happened to you?
7. Has this book influenced your ideas about being a parent in any way? How? Has it, at least, made you think about it a little more? In what ways?
8. After reading this book, would you prefer to be married to your children's other parent and stay with him? If not, and even if you were angry with him or her, would you make sure your children knew that person?
9. What do you see as the main difference between the two generations represented in this story? The mothers made some radical decisions for political reasons. Do their kids have the same kind of social conscience that their mothers had? Why was the older generation more concerned about causes, reform, and the black community as a whole than their kids are today?
10. What do you think kept Patrice and Cherry--best friends for twenty years--from revealing to each other the identity of their children's father?
11. Do you think Patrice did the right thing in lying to Saint? Is there any justification for this action on her part? How would you feel if your mother had kept something like that from you? What would you do if you were her?
12. Why do you think Aisha turns to shoplifting?
13. Twenty years ago, premeditated single motherhood was a political statement. Is that still the case today? How has this changed? Why do you think all these women were attracted to Gene Green?
14. What does this story have to say about the resilience of African American women and, by extension, the African American community as a whole?
15. Have you ever known anyone like Gene? Do you believe there are people like him? Is he a sympathetic or unsympathetic character?

## Author Bio

A practicing criminal defense attorney and the author of two previous novels, **La Maravilla** and **The Silver Cloud Café** (both available in Plume editions), Alfredo Vía was born in Arizona and lived the life of a migrant worker before being sent to Vietnam. After his discharge, he worked a series of jobs--from truck driver to carnival mechanic--as he put himself through law school. **Gods Go Begging** was also the winner of the 1999 Bay Area Book Reviewers' Award for Fiction. Vía lives in San Francisco.

## Critical Praise

" "FUNNY AND POIGNANT. " *-Publishers Weekly* "HEARTWARMING." " *-Kirkus Reviews*

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