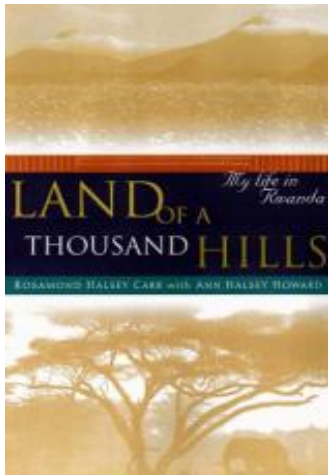


Land of A Thousand Hills

by Jane Haddem



About the Book

In 1949, Rosamond Halsey Carr, a young fashion illustrator living in New York City, accompanied her dashing hunter-explorer husband to what was then the Belgian Congo. She packed four cotton dresses and a lifetime supply of cold cream. When her marriage fell apart, she decided to stay on in neighboring Rwanda and found solace managing Mugongo, a flower plantation in the foothills of the Virunga volcanoes.

Whether chugging up the Congo on a paddle-wheel steamboat, rubbing elbows with pygmy chiefs (or wealthy colonial neighbors), being pursued through the dark by a stalking leopard, or visiting friend Dian Fossey and her mountain gorillas at Karisoke, Carr found herself living a life of cinematic proportions. In the process, she witnessed a half century of the politics of a deeply troubled country and saw firsthand the decline and fall of colonialism, the wars for independence, and the relentless clashes between the Hutus and the Tutsis. She experienced everything from near-bankruptcy to tribal warfare to an ill-fated love affair. Following 1994's Hutu-Tutsi genocide, Carr turned her plantation into a shelter for lost and orphaned children-work she continues to this day, at the age of eighty-eight. Out of an Africa now vanished into memory and myth, this is her extraordinary story.

A memoir written in the grand romantic tradition, **Land Of A Thousand Hills** brings to vivid life a landscape whose magic is aptly evoked through breathtaking descriptions of everything from rampaging elephants to erupting volcanoes to life on a pyrethrum plantation. It is the story of "a remarkable woman possessed of a great spirit who has had enough adventures for several lifetimes."

Discussion Guide

1. In **Land of a Thousand Hills**, Carr talks about her fifty-plus-year love affair with Africa. Did this begin from the moment she and her husband arrived in the Belgian Congo? How, if at all, did those feelings change once she was divorced and running a plantation on her own? How did Carr's background her experiences and perceptions prepare her

for what she calls "a lifetime of adventure?"

2. Do you feel that Carr offers a thoughtful and insightful examination of Africa? Is she open and objective in her views? How does who she is an American living in a foreign country influence her judgment? Is her memoir a fair-minded portrait of a troubled land? Or does she view Africa and its people through the lens of her own personal experience?

3. Are Carr's descriptions evocative? Do they convey a dramatic immediacy that makes you feel as if you were there? Or is reading the book, as one reviewer describes, "like sitting down for a long chat with a good friend who's been away?"

4. For over six years, Carr has worked with Rwanda's displaced and orphaned children in a shelter she created. How does this continuing act of charity underscore her continued devotion to her adopted country? How has she improved the lives of these children? In what ways has she enhanced her own life—a woman who never had children of her own?

5. In more than half a century in Africa, Carr has had the most extraordinary experiences the kinds of life-changing events most women (and men) never know. How do you feel they helped to shape the woman she ultimately became?

6. Carr lived through many turning points and watershed moments in Africa's history: the collapse of colonialism; the wars for independence; the clashes between the Hutus and the Tutsis. How does she describe these pivotal events? Does she have a definitive point of view? Is she sympathetic to Africa's causes?

7. A reviewer has said that Carr "left her mark of beauty on a tragic land." In what ways has she influenced Africa? How has Africa changed her?

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 Véa 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. Véa lives in San Francisco.

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