



ONE KIND FAVOR by Kevin McIlvoy

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CONVERSATION STARTERS

- One Kind Favor announces itself as satire. Do you often read satire? Do you believe that designation invites a specific kind of reader?
- The primary setting of One Kind Favor is the consignment-bar, *Stanley's Acker's Stanley's*. Are there any particular aspects of that place that you find memorable and, if so, why?
- Describe the effect of the novel's frequent references to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* and to Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle."
- Comment on the different forms of humor you experience in this novel. Identify the humorous sections that you found most engaging, and the sections you found least engaging, explaining your differing reactions.
- The book portrays "presences" and makes reference to many traditions of ghost stories in which uncertainties about identity intensify as the story unfolds. Reflect on your own experiences with ghost stories. Describe your assumptions about why ghost stories have importance to different cultures in different eras.
- The specter of Lincoln's death haunts all of One Kind Favor, yet the novel offers no definite answer to the question of the killer or killers. Why leave this matter of plot unresolved? Why leave other questions unresolved, such as identifying the murderers of Mr. Panther's two nieces; such as revealing the fate of the agents Shaw, Ward, and Melvin?

- Woolman and Lincoln and Acker have a significant relationship with Oppy, the Mars rover. How do you respond to such fantastical developments?
- As a reader how do you respond to an extreme character like Acker? Do your responses to her shift as you move through the story? Do you feel that male readers will respond to her differently than female readers?
- Many developments that take place in the Helltel are absurd. As an important setting in the book how does the Helltel lend itself to absurdity? Would you characterize the Helltel as an archetype of the “haunted house”?
- Several background stories emerge in the course of the novel: about Minister Stanley, Junior Stanley, Mrs. Panther, Marie, Jadia, Union Vedder, Eedie and Eddie; about the community of Cord as a place that has undergone many changes; about the Piedmont region of North Carolina. Do you feel there is a thematic linkage in these background stories?
- *One Kind Favor* assigns emphasis to the butterfly ceremony enacted in the consignment-bar. Why does this ceremony matter to the major and minor characters who participate in it?
- As you recollect your reading experiences in *One Kind Favor* are you reminded of other works of literature? Do you have an opinion about whether this novel speaks to an older or a younger generation of readers?