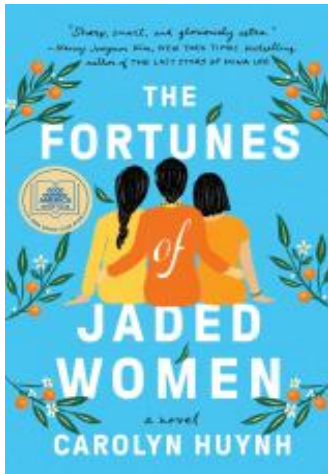


# The Fortunes of Jaded Women

by Carolyn Huynh



## About the Book

For fans of Jonathan Tropper, KJ Dell’Antonia and Kevin Kwan, this “sharp, smart and gloriously extra” (Nancy Jooyoun Kim, *THE LAST STORY OF MINA LEE*) debut follows a family of estranged Vietnamese women --- cursed to never know love or happiness --- as they reunite when a psychic makes a startling prediction.

*Everyone in Orange County’s Little Saigon knew that the Duong sisters were cursed.*

It started with their ancestor, Oanh, who dared to leave her marriage for true love --- so a fearsome Vietnamese witch cursed Oanh and her descendants so that they would never find love or happiness, and the Duong women would give birth to daughters, never sons.

Oanh’s current descendant, Mai Nguyen, knows this curse well. She’s divorced, and after an explosive disagreement a decade ago, she’s estranged from her younger sisters, Minh Pham (the middle and the mediator) and Khuyen Lam (the youngest who swears she just runs humble coffee shops and nail salons, not Little Saigon’s underground). Though Mai’s three adult daughters --- Priscilla, Thuy and Thao --- are successful in their careers (*one of them is John Cho’s dermatologist!*), the same can’t be said for their love lives. Mai is convinced they might drive her to an early grave.

Desperate for guidance, she consults Auntie Hua, her trusted psychic in Hawaii, who delivers an unexpected prediction: this year, her family will witness a marriage, a funeral and the birth of a son. This prophecy will reunite estranged mothers, daughters, aunts and cousins --- for better or for worse.

A multi-narrative novel brimming with levity and candor, *THE FORTUNES OF JADED WOMEN* is about mourning, meddling, celebrating and healing together as a family. It shows how Vietnamese women emerge victorious, even if the world is against them.

## Discussion Guide

1. The story starts with the beginnings of a curse and predictions from a psychic. How do both the curse and psychic set up the rest of the story?
2. Discuss the similarities and differences between each generation of women. Are any of the daughters like their mothers?
3. Tho references her "Asian-daughter guilt" (page 74) when talking about being away from home for as long as she has. Do you think the idea of mother/daughter guilt is a universal concept?
4. Why was jade such an important symbol to the family, specifically through jewelry?
5. Although they all have various frustrations with one another, the D??ng sisters and their daughters clearly love each other. What are some ways they demonstrate their affection, albeit in perhaps untraditional manner?
6. Setting plays an important part in the novel. What feelings are invoked when in Seattle, Saigon or Orange County? Discuss how the different neighborhoods and houses play a pivotal role in the characters' lives.
7. There are many funny scenes in the novel, in addition to its humorous tone. Which moments made you laugh, and how did they make you feel about the characters?
8. Mark, Andy, Daniel, Anh and even Dr. Hak all have their roles to play as the men in the lives of the D??ng sisters. Discuss how these relationships are all woven together and the significance of each of these characters.
9. "Pass this necklace on to your oldest daughter, and when your oldest daughter is of age, the necklace will help her bear the children she wants. She will continue passing down the necklace, throughout the generations, and the necklace will always reveal their real desires in their children" (page 240). Why was this revelation important? How does it change everything the sisters have ever believed about their family?
10. Discuss how the novel is organized and broken into five parts --- "The Predictions," "The Funeral," "The Pregnancy," "The Wedding" and "The Grandson."
11. Each character brings something different to the story. Did you relate to any of them? If so, please explain who and why.
12. When the novel ends, we see Priscilla go see the psychic to learn about her daughter. Given that she is someone who "always relied on numbers as the source of truth in the universe" (page 19), why do you think she continues this tradition?

## Author Bio

Carolyn Huynh grew up in Orange County, California, not appreciating the weather enough. She has a BA in journalism from Seattle University and an MS in human centered design from the University of Washington. The youngest daughter of Vietnamese refugees, her writing focuses on her mother's tall tales, superstitions, the diaspora and memory (both real and imaginary). She especially loves stories about messy Asian women who never learn from their mistakes. After living up and down the West Coast, she currently resides in Los Angeles with her rabbit and dog. She still doesn't appreciate the weather enough. When she's not writing, Carolyn daydreams about having iced coffee on a rooftop in Saigon.

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## **The Fortunes of Jaded Women**

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