

## Raising Aphrodite

**Kirk Curnutt**

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*With contemporary problems and topics, musical references, and spot-on dialogue, this novel is both relatable and humorous.*

With a tagline like “A Contemporary Comedy of Parenting Errors about a Single Father, a Rock ‘n’ Roll Daughter, and the Elusive Dream of Friendship Between the Sexes,” there should be no mystery about *Raising Aphrodite*’s content. Despite its bulky title, Kirk Curnutt’s story is a believable, fast-paced, and amusing read.

Single father Vance has a teenage daughter—thus, tension and drama are inherent. The inevitability of boyfriends and sex throws him for a loop, however, and he seeks insight and advice from a cast of characters in small-town Alabama, including a lesbian best friend. Surrounded by close friends and informed by the music of female rockers, Vance’s quest is to impart wisdom and guidance to his kin while he seeks to get a new business venture off the ground. Complicating his life are everyday struggles like dwindling finances, self-doubt, and the search for understanding between the sexes.

There are a few layers to the story, including appreciation of classical Greek sculpture, political persecution of a foreign female rock band, and an ex-wife newly arrived to town. Throw in a looming teen battle of the bands, an adversarial business partner, and a private eye to lend a contemporary bent.

There’s a lot going on, but Curnutt keeps the story plausible with spot-on dialogue and realistic supporting characters. This supporting cast has depth and variety—these could be people you know. The first-person perspective shows Vance’s struggles, doubts, and thoughtful ruminations on females. With so many musical references to specific artists, songs, and messages, it seems music is a character in itself, adding to the believability of this frothy read.

Vance is an educated and enlightened man, yet he makes silly mistakes that land him in a few holes. Regardless of his flaws and foibles, he’s a likable character. The dialogue is a huge part of the story, but it is brisk and credible, and Curnutt sets up scenes with ease.

*Raising Aphrodite* is an easy read that is enjoyable for its realistic slice of life, complex male character, and musical references.

FELICIA TOPP (Summer 2015)

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