

## BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

### *The Two Sisters of Borneo* by Ian Hamilton

1. *The Two Sisters of Borneo* begins with a wedding and ends with a funeral. Which is more significant in Ava's life? Why?
2. May Ling and Ava don't want to "jinx" Amanda and Michael's wedding with bad news. Do unfortunate events and bad news have the power to jinx important events? Is it important to keep the bride and groom "protected inside a happy bubble" as Ava sees her job as maid of honour (p. 3)?
3. Ava and May Ling decide to invest in the Borneo Fine Hardwoods and Furniture Company because Amanda and Chi-Tze went to school together. Did Ava, May Ling, and Amanda do their due diligence before investing in the company, or did they rely too heavily on this personal connection? Was there more they could have done to prevent the fiasco that ensued?
4. Ava finds a forensic accountant — Jacob Smits — in the Netherlands who seems honest, trustworthy, resourceful, and efficient. Has Ava found a male version of herself in the previous Ava Lee novels or is he "too good to be true" as Ava fears (p. 131)?
5. Ah-Pei hired thugs to "scare" Amanda and Chi-Tze. Considering that she knows something about the thugs and how they operate, how could she have failed to foresee the possible outcome? Did she care more about the money than her sister? Can she ever be forgiven?
6. What did you think was the biggest plot twist? What was the most surprising event?
7. Ava would not usually put herself in a dangerous situation, especially after her encounter with the Scottish Banker of Surayaba (a previous Ava Lee novel), where she is vastly outnumbered by untrustworthy men. Why do you think her guard was down when dealing with Wan?
8. Is there honour among thieves or only fear? When Ava is kidnapped, only one of her captors chooses to sexually assault her. Why does he do this? Why do the others refrain from doing this?

9. How far would you go for family? For the person you love? For a friend? Why does Ah-Pei listen to her Dutch lover and steal from her own company?
10. Is Ah-Pei right to feel that she has been carrying the weight of her siblings without thanks or reward? Does the eldest sibling always shoulder this sort of burden in the family? Who does she seem to resent more: Her brothers Tambi and Mamat for their non-contribution to the business, or her sister Chi-Tze for her being sent away to university? Did their parents contribute to the inequality that Ah-Pei feels?
11. Ava says to Ah-Pei, "What I don't understand is how you could tear your family apart like that. What else do we have in this world that we can rely on? If we don't have family, we have nothing. That's how I was raised, and I can't imagine you were raised any differently" (p. 281). Despite Ava's noble sentiments, family members abandon, neglect, and betray each other all the time. Are these betrayals harder to overcome than those from people outside of our families? Ava spends only a day or two in Canada, where her mother, sister, and girlfriend live, so is it possible to reconstruct a family out of non-blood relations?
12. The attendance at Uncle's funeral is enormous. What does this say about the way the Chinese business diaspora works in Southeast Asia? What does it say about Uncle's *guanxi* (connections)? Uncle was once chair of the Triad, so can he be considered a noble character?
13. Besides leaving her his money, Uncle also seems to have left Ava a new protector, Xu. How do you think their relationship will play out? Does Xu seem more dangerous than helpful?