

Blood Relation



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A New Yorker writer investigates the life and career of his hit-man great-uncle and the impact on his family. When he was sent off to boarding school Königsberg learned from an ex-cop security guard that there a shameful, long-hidden family secret , his great-uncle Harold, in prison in upstate New York, was a legendary Mafia enforcer, suspected by the FBI of upwards of twenty murders. His grandfather, a Jewish Horatio Alger story who had become a respected merchant through honesty and hard work, never spoke of his baby brother. When other relatives could be coaxed into talking about him, he wasn't "Kayo" Königsberg, the "smartest hit man" and "toughest Jew" described by cops and associates; he was Uncle Heshy, the smalltime con, long since written off as dead. Intrigued, Königsberg ignored his family's protests and arranged a meeting, which inspired this book. In "Blood Relation," Königsberg portrays Harold as a fascinating, paradoxical character: both brutal and winning, a cold-blooded killer and a larger-than-life charmer who taught himself to read as an adult and served as his own lawyer in two major trials, to riotous effect. Königsberg traces his great-uncle's checkered and outlandish life and investigates his impact on his family and others who crossed his path, weaving together strands of family, Jewish identity, justice, and postwar American history.

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