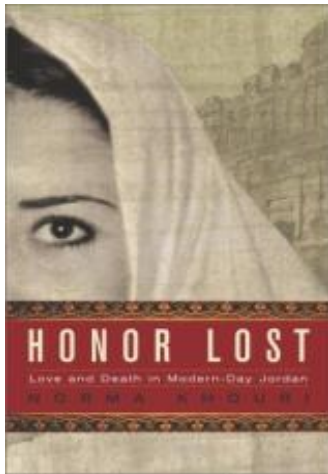


Honor Lost: Love and Death in Modern-Day Jordan

by Norma Khouri



About the Book

Author Norma Khouri and her friend Dalia were like sisters. Since the age of three they were inseparable, sharing in all the childhood joys that a modern, middle-class life in Amman, Jordan, had to offer. By all appearances, they seemed very much alike: Like most Arab daughters they lived under the jurisdiction of their male brethren, and each was expected to enter a marriage based on family honor -- not love. But Norma's family was Christian, Dalia's was Muslim, and each of the girls was bound to age-old religious customs and traditions that would someday tear them apart.

Dalia is twenty-five when she falls in love with Michael, a Catholic. Their relationship is more than just a crime in the name of Islam: It is grounds for an "honor killing," a practice that remains legal in Jordan today. Still, Dalia would have sacrificed everything -- her relations, her beliefs, even her homeland -- to be with Michael...until Dalia's family finds out about her *haraam*, or forbidden, love.

As tragic as it is true, **Honor Lost** is by turns a heartwarming romance, a eulogy, and a cry for freedom for women across the globe.

Discussion Guide

1. What prompted you to read **Honor Lost**? Did you have any knowledge of honor killings prior to reading this book?
2. In American culture, it is generally considered politically incorrect to pass judgment on another culture and its customs and traditions. As a Jordanian, the author does not hold back her condemnation of the Islamic tradition and the treatment of women in general. How, if at all, did this influence the way you reacted to the events in the book? How did Norma's larger mission influence the way she told the story? Do you feel like there's another side to the story?
3. The author says that in Jordan the system of law, tradition and religion is taught in a systematic way. She calls it

"gradual, incontestable and unavoidable." Through stories, teachings and legends, girls are taught their place in their families and in society and learn what to expect of their future. Are these same tools used in a similar way in the American culture to maintain the status quo? What challenges does this present to women's groups that want to change the way women are treated in the Islamic world?

4. What factors motivate the men in this story to uphold and encourage the status quo? Is there a happy medium between the liberal western culture and the strict laws of the Middle East?

5. Dalia paid the ultimate price for being committed to her relationship and her dreams. Norma, too, suffered for her commitment to her friend. Did the men in the book suffer in any way for the commitment they made to their cultural beliefs?

6. Would you have felt differently about Dalia had she been involved sexually with Michael? How important to the story was it that Dalia be innocent and chaste?

7. The author repeatedly illustrates the bond she shared with Dalia. Put yourself in Norma's place. Would you have helped Dalia meet secretly with Michael? How would you have reacted toward Dalia's father after her death?

8. As Dalia and Norma planned and executed their meetings with Michael and Jehan, do you think they truly understood the consequences of their actions?

9. Explore the themes of survival exemplified throughout the book. What does survival mean to the men in the book? What does survival mean to Dalia and Norma's mothers? In contrast, what does *living* mean to Dalia and Norma? Where did their desire for a different life come from?

10. Although the general outcome was known when the book began -- it was no secret that Dalia would be killed in an honor killing -- what surprises did you encounter while reading the story? What emotions did you experience?

Author Bio

Norma Khouri is a poet and the author of short fiction. As a result of the events recounted in **Honor Lost** (which was written secretly in an Internet café), she was forced to emigrate to Athens. She now lives in Australia. The author is donating a portion of her royalties to women's organizations working to outlaw honor crimes.

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Critical Praise

"A timeless tragedy of Shakespeare's star-cross'd lovers is reflected in... this deeply affecting story."--- *Publishers Weekly*
"[A] deeply moving work....[T]he dark horror of honor killing is brought to life for Western readers."--- *Library Journal*
"Terrifying and inspiring."--- *The Washington Times*

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