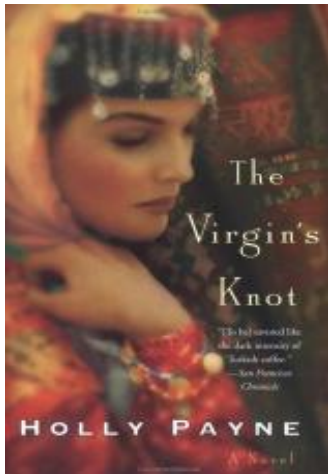


The Virgin's Knot

by Holly Payne



About the Book

Holly Payne bursts onto the literary scene with this astonishing first novel about a celebrated Turkish weaver who must choose between spiritual and carnal love, between devotion to her god and submission to the primitive laws that govern her land.

Nurdane is the famed weaver of Mavisu. From her remote village in southwestern Turkey, she is believed to weave healing powers into her unique rugs?rugs that she does not keep for herself, but creates as dowries for young brides. Stricken with polio as a child, she is not expected to become a bride herself. The purity of her virginal hands is thought to pass into the extraordinary knots she weaves. The recipients of the rugs are thought to be blessed and Nurdane is treated as a living legend by the people in her village.

Nurdane's father, Ali, creates the myth of the virgin's knots in an attempt to restore honor and dignity to his handicapped daughter. Despite the esteem that accompanies her beautiful, mysterious weaving, Nurdane must choose between fulfilling her obligations to her father and her supposed purity and loving for herself.

Hennessey is an American anthropologist who travels to Turkey in search of historical ruins. After falling ill, he is taken into the care of Nurdane's doctor, Adam. The two men travel together to Mavisu, where Hennessey is as mystified and intrigued by Nurdane and her rugs as he is with his excavations. Both men are permanently changed by this trip to Mavisu and their relationships with Nurdane.

The Virgin's Knot, is rich with Turkish tradition, culture and history. Filled with unexpected twists, it celebrates life, loss and studies the path of an exceptional young woman as she searches for her true identity and a path from personal obscurity to love.

Discussion Guide

1. What is the significance of Ali pushing Nurdane to do the work of Allah? What kind of burden does he put on Nurdane? Is Ali trying to protect Nurdane or benefit from her talents?
2. Why doesn't Nurdane immediately tell her father about the thieves? What was she trying to protect? How did the experience make her feel about herself? What does Nurdane's silence teach us about her character?
3. Is Nurdane treated like the other young women her age in the village? How does the fact that she is never expected to marry change her role in her culture?
4. What role does Muammer play in Nurdane's life? How does Muammer help her and why? Is he genuinely concerned or just nosy?
5. Discuss the irony of Nurdane being born into a nomadic culture and not being able to walk.
6. What are the similarities between Ayse and Nurdane? What are the differences? How are all of the women in Mavisu linked by tradition?
7. What is Hennessey hoping to find in Mavisu? Does he find what he is looking for? How does Nurdane help him to find it?
8. What motivates Adam's love for Nurdane? Does Nurdane find Adam's medical help useful?
9. How does Hennessey's gesture in picking up the scarf when he first meets Nurdane challenge the way men and women interact in a traditional Islamic society? **10.** Why did Nurdane bury the razor blade that she found in the woods with Muammer? Why did this make Muammer nervous? Is Nurdane superstitious?
11. Do you consider Nurdane to be a heroine? Why?
12. What is the significance of Nurdane's sacrifice in regard to the history of women?
13. Despite the sexual innuendos, what is the true reward that Nurdane receives by leading Hennessey into the cave?

Author Bio

Holly Payne received her MFA from the USC Master of Professional Writing Program, Los Angeles. She teaches screenwriting at the Academy of Art College in San Francisco. **The Virgin's Knot** is her first novel.

Critical Praise

"A thoughtful, tempered debut... Payne keeps the story simple, elemental, and reserved, emphasizing the timeless quality of the tragic tale... a well-crafted, meditative piece."

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