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A Winter Marriage: A Novel

by Kerry Hardie



About the Book

This intoxicating tale of marriage, desire, and betrayal introduces one of the most irresistible heroines of recent fiction. She is Hannie Bennet, a battle-scarred divorcée and widow who embarks upon her fifth marriage with a clear objective: to put a roof over her head and food in her stomach. But Hannie's relationship with aging Ned appears doomed from the start. In the unnervingly tranquil Irish countryside where the couple settles, an unwelcome visitor - the embodiment of a secret past - not only threatens their chance at a life of quiet accommodation but menaces the entire community. Ultimately, it is up to Hannie, facing the most difficult choice a mother could ever confront, to prevent a deadly finale.

Discussion Guide

1. Is Hannie Bennet a survivor or an opportunist? How has her strategic approach to marriage helped her? In what ways has it harmed her?

2. Who stands to gain the most from getting married, Ned or Hannie? What sacrifices does each one make?

3. Do you consider Ned's hometown tranquil or desolate? What role does the eerily serene Irish countryside play in the tragedy?

4. Why does Hannie remain distanced from Ned's neighbors? Is it her chilliness or their unwillingness to accept change?

5. Hannie is caught between her loyalty to Joss and her responsibility to Ned. Does she make the right decisions? If you were in Hannie's place, what would you do differently?

6. Why is Joss so angry? Is his violence innate? What does the story seem to say about the nature of evil?

7. Do Ned and Hannie actually learn to love each other throughout the ordeal, or does their marriage remain a mutually beneficial accommodation?

8. Do you think Ned should forgive Hannie? What does the novel suggest about the nature of forgiveness?

9. How might the story told in *A Winter Marriage* have been different if the novel's setting were different?

10. Is Hannie a heroine or an antiheroine? Is she to be pitied or admired?

Author Bio

Kerry Hardie grew up in Northern Ireland and studied English at York University, England. She has worked for the BBC and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and has received the Friends Provident National Poetry Prize. She lives in County Kilkenny, Ireland, with her husband, Sean.

Critical Praise

"Hannie is compulsively interesting, and it is impossible to leave her as the story unfolds. . . . Though tranquillity is not the fruit of this particular harvest, admiration for a new author who can make the reader think, wonder, and argue very much is."

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