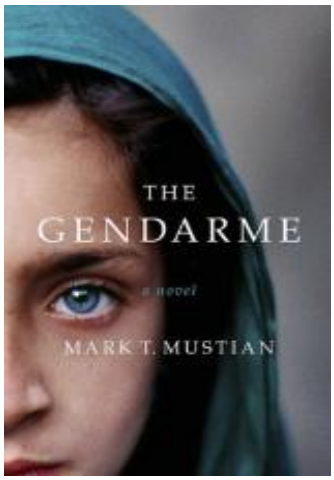
The Gendarme

by Mark T. Mustian



About the Book

To those around him, Emmett Conn is an old man on the verge of senility. A World War I veteran, he?s been affected by memory loss since being injured in the war. Now, at the end of his life, he?s beset by memories of events he and others have denied or purposely forgotten.

In Emmett?s dreams he?s a gendarme, escorting Armenians from Turker. A young woman among them, Araxie, captivates and enthralls him. She becomes the love of his life. But then the trek ends, the war separates them. He is injured. Seven decades later, as his grasp on the boundaries between past and present begins to break down, he sets out on a final journey, to find Araxie, and beg her forgiveness.

Alternating between Turkey at the dawn of the twentieth century and Americs in the 1990s, **The Gendarme** shows how love can overcome nationalities and politics, and how the human spirit fights to survive in the face of hopelessness. It is a transcendent novel.

Discussion Guide

1. Do you like Emmett Conn? Does knowing what he did during the war change your opinion of him? Is it possible to be a good person in spite of having done evil things?

2. Do you think it is possible to completely block out some memories or to recover others that have been ?lost??

3. Do our memories of the past change as we get older?

4. The conflict between the Turks and the Armenians involved religion, yet God and religion are largely absent from the book. Why do you think that is? Do you think religious differences are sometimes used for political purposes?

5. What kind of transformation does Ahmet undergo during the march? If he hadn?t fallen in love with Araxie, do you think he would have had any change of heart about what he was doing?

6. Emmett?s story is in part an immigrant?s tale. What about America works as he thought it would? What doesn?t?

7. Why do you think the author chose to have Emmett committed to a mental institution? What comment do you think the author is trying to make here?

8. Why do you think Emmett reminds Violet of the child she gave up for adoption?

9. In the dream, Ahmet postulates that the Armenians more or less deserved their fate because of their actions. Yet how does he react as Emmett Conn when Recep?s nephew says essentially the same thing?

10. What do our dreams tell us about ourselves? When Emmett finds himself strangling the home health aide Ethan, does that speak to his past or to something else?

11. At the end of the book, Araxie?s granddaughter discloses that Araxie was, in fact, not Armenian. What does this say about the Turkish-Armenian conflict? What do you think the author was trying to say with this plot twist?

12. Why is Emmett so fixated on Wilfred? Is he trying to ?live his life over,? as Violet claims? What else might he see in Wilfred?

13. When Ahmet prays at a mosque in Aleppo, a Christian church?s spire comes into view and he says he ?has bowed before both of these things all his life.? Yet when he sees Araxie for the last time, the difference in their religions stands as an obstacle between them. Is this resolved?

14. When Emmitt emigrates to the U.S., why do you think he leaves Islam behind but refuses to join his wife?s church?

15. Do you think the author is making any commentary on how we treat the elderly in our society?

16. What do you think is Emmett?s view of Turks and Armenians by the end of the book?

Author Bio

Mark T. Mustian is an author, attorney, and a city commissioner. He lives with his wife and three children in Tallahassee, Florida.

Critical Praise

"Ahmet Khan's spiritual transition to Emmet Cohn is emotionally resonant. This is an important and unique journey told with compassion and a stirring sense of humanity."

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