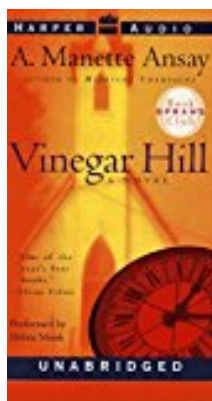


[PDF] Vinegar Hill

A. Manette Ansay, Debra Monk - pdf download free book



Books Details:

Title: Vinegar Hill
Author: A. Manette Ansay, Debra Monk
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Description:

Oprah Book Club® Selection, November 1999: Vinegar Hill is an appropriate address for the characters who populate A. Manette Ansay's novel of the same name. After all, when Ellen Grier and her family return to the rural hamlet of Holly's Field, Wisconsin, it's not exactly a happy homecoming. Her husband, James, has been laid off from his job in Illinois. And for the moment, the family has moved in with Ellen's in-laws, Fritz and Mary-Margaret, an unhappy pair who dislike their daughter-in-law almost as much as they despise each other: The first time Ellen sat at this table she was twenty years old, bright-cheeked after a spring afternoon spent walking along the lakefront with James, planning their upcoming wedding. It was 1959 and she was eager to make a good impression. She didn't know then that Mary-Margaret disliked her, that she was considered *Jimmy's mistake*.

Thirteen years later, in 1972, Ellen is back at the table with no escape in sight. Both she and her husband do find work. Yet James seems to settle a tad too easily into his old life, and shows no interest in finding a place of their own. Even worse, his job takes him away from home for weeks at a time, leaving Ellen to cope with her abusive in-laws.

In *Vinegar Hill* Ansay paints a searing portrait of the Midwest's dark side, of a rural culture infected with despair and ruled over by an unforgiving God. Yet she does hold out a grain of hope, too. Just as Ellen seems permanently entangled in familial desperation, she makes a surprising discovery about James's long-dead grandmother--a woman whose rebellious spirit inspires Ellen to rescue herself and her loved ones from the impinging darkness. This late-breaking redemption doesn't cancel out the preceding unhappiness: *Vinegar Hill* remains a tough, uncompromising tale, one that requires some fortitude to read. But those with the heart for it will be rewarded with fine, spare prose and a hopeful ending. --*Alix Wilber* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly Set in 1972, Ansay's debut novel revolves around Ellen Grier's struggle for liberation--liberation from her marriage to James, from her virtual enslavement to her sanctimonious, cruel in-laws and from what she sees as the stultifying demands of her religion, Roman Catholicism. Financial difficulties have forced James and Ellen, along with their two children, to move back to the small Wisconsin town where they grew up and where they now share an acrimonious and joyless life with James's parents. Virtually every character is victimized by a private misery that causes pain and alienation and that in turn victimizes others. Ansay, who teaches creative writing at Vanderbilt, is adept at delineating these worlds of suffering, and her language can be both apt and beautiful. But she offers too many descriptions of the nightmares and waking bad dreams that seem to afflict all of her characters, and the reader begins to share the sense of being caught in a bad dream. As the story concentrates more on Ellen's search for identity--a familiar tale presented here in a familiar way--this sense of nightmare is intensified by an impression of *deja vu*. Though uneven, the novel offers glimpses of Ansay's potential to deliver a more coherent book next time.

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