



A Wife of Noble Character

Yvonne Georgina Puig

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A juicy, sprawling comedy of manners about a group of thirtysomethings navigating friendship, love, and their fledgling careers among Houston's high-powered, oil-money elite.

Thirty-year-old Vivienne Cally is wealthy in name only. Orphaned as a child and raised by a cold but regal aunt, Vivienne was taught to rely on her beauty and Texas tradition, and is expected to marry a wealthy and respectable man who will honor the Cally name. Friends with Houston's richest and most prominent families, she's a beloved fixture at the social events big and small, and suffers no shortage of access to some of the city's most eligible bachelors. Preston Duffin has known Vivienne and her set since childhood. He's never shared their social aspirations or their status but is liked and respected for his sharp wit and intelligence. About to graduate from a prestigious architecture program, he is both fascinated and repelled by this group of friends he sits on the cusp of. He's long admired Vivienne's beauty and grace, but isn't sure he holds any place in such a traditional life. Intrigued by Preston's ambitions and the extent to which he challenges the only way of life she's ever known, Vivienne both courts Preston's attention, and rebuffs his critiques of her predictable and antiquated priorities and values. Inspired by Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, Yvonne Georgina Puig's *A Wife of Noble Character* shares the original novel's astute social commentary at the same time that it illuminates the trappings and rewards of coming of age that are wholly unique to the twenty-first century. Charming and shrewd at once, this Texas love story takes readers from Houston to Paris and Switzerland and back again, and will speak to both fans of Wharton and anyone who has every struggled to find their way in life.

A Wife of Noble Character Details

Date : Published August 1st 2017 by St. Martin's Griffin (first published August 2nd 2016)

ISBN : 9781250134912

Author : Yvonne Georgina Puig

Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Fiction, Romance, Womens Fiction, Chick Lit, Contemporary, Adult, Did Not Finish

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From Reader Review A Wife of Noble Character for online ebook

Tangled in Text says

Originally posted on 09/15 on www.bookfix.weebly.com with GIVEAWAY!!!!

This story was as beautiful as the cover. I will say though that the cover is deceiving. I have a habit of trying not to read the synopsis before diving into a book, so I don't try and figure out the twists and endings before I even read the first page, so I went into this blind. I was expecting an old fifties era with the neon coloring and the use of the word "noble" in the title, maybe an even older setting, but was pleasantly surprised to find it set in the present.

I loved the life stage chosen for this novel. I'm used to reading whirlwind romances that would either fall into the young adult genre (18-25 year olds) or classics (40s and up). The thirties were refreshing to read. They were more realistic and had some funny dry humor that only someone in their thirties would be experiencing. A little vulgar but I found it funny when Vivienne joked that she'd given more blow jobs to this man than her entire blow jobbing life combined and she was beginning to question if he was gay. The perception of sex was not fireworks and rainbows, but just something adults did. Also, with sex not being such a big hooray that the story revolved around, the rest of the story was able to be more deeply developed.

What thrilled me about this book was that it almost wasn't even a love story. It focused more on a girl going through her dirty thirties trying to figure out which path she should take. It was more focused on self-love than throwing yourself at a man broken and thinking that might fix you. It was the struggle of other's perceptions and predetermined paths fighting against one's own desires.

There is so much to love about this book I could write a book about all the small details I loved. The trip to Paris, the explosive "family" dinner that held so much hidden drama that it felt like many I've personally experienced, the jealousy, and then finally the tile pulling self-made woman. Speaking of jealousy though, my favorite character besides Vivienne might just have to be Karlie who I loved to hate because oh she pissed me off constantly, which in turn made me love her as a character. All the detail in the epilogue, made me reread it three times over to make sure I didn't miss how things turned out. All the bases were covered in such a short wedding announcement, it was perfect. I would highly recommend this book to those that love the young adult genre as well as the classic romances. It's a beautiful story and a fun read. Five out of five stars. Do you know an architect?

Terrill says

I received an advanced readers copy of this book in return for an honest review.

It took me a second start to get into this book. The first beginning was a struggle for me but I'm glad I gave it a second try. I may have just needed to finish the books I was already reading. It's worth it as it all comes together and ended up being an enjoyable read.

The main character, Vivienne, is difficult to like and understand in the beginning and my main struggles were trying to figure out her and Preston's relationship without much history to give context. Eventually, as I understood Vivienne and maybe even more so, Preston, it all began to make sense.

Quite a bit happens in this book and I try to stay away from spoilers when I review. I will say that as she discovers who she is and makes choices it was wonderful to read a book where the protagonist doesn't simply make the most obvious decisions. You really never knew what she was going to do.

There were many other lovable characters Kitty, Waverly and Clay come to mind, but also many to dislike or root against. This is a book that I anticipate reading again as well as sharing with my sister and friends.

This is a read that is fun but also engages your mind. I recommend this to those who like books that aren't formulaic and obvious. This book takes some twists and turns and had me rooting for, against and then for the protagonist, Vivienne, as I read.

Angel says

This is the best book I have read this year. Puig is a very skillful writer who develops central characters that are whole and complex and fallible. As a Texan, I think I enjoyed glimmers of things that I recognize and it's nice to be able to accurately picture the climate (literally) of a lot of the story -- so many take place in the North East. Wherever you are, this is a fulfilling read and I look forward to more from Puig.

Patty says

What it's all about...

What an interesting, confusing and kind of lackluster book this was for me to read. Vivienne Cally...supposed "it" girl of her part of oil rich Texas...was pretty much not an "it" girl. She lived with her aunt, had literally no money but had to keep up with all of her friends who had money. Stealing from her aunt helped and trying to find a wealthy husband helped but Vivienne had tons of trouble with the finding of the rich husband part. At times her sexual mistakes literally made potential husbands run from her...specifically Bucky...ick. She meets Preston Duffin...architect...but it takes years and to tons of mistakes for them to finally connect.

Why I wanted to read it...

I wanted to read this because everything that I read about it made it sound much more exciting than it was.

I started this book with such high hopes but it literally was a sad book to read. I had no real connection with any one and I just didn't "get" them...and I didn't really want to. I ended this book still not getting Vivienne Cally and totally not caring about what she did with her life! Readers should read other reviews of this book before making their final choice about it...it just was not a good choice for me.

Navidad Thelamour says

I received an advance-read copy of this book from the publisher, Henry Holt & Co., via NetGalley in

exchange for an honest review.

Boy, was I looking forward to reading this one! With its attractive cover promising intrigue, social commentary and references to Wharton, I was sold like a new car and eagerly clicked ‘Request’ on NetGalley the moment I came across it. But upon reading it, I came away with a mixed bag of emotions toward it that left me a bit dissatisfied. What I liked about Puig’s *A Wife of Noble Character* was that it didn’t follow the trajectory I thought it would, and that’s always a plus. I had an idea in my head of how it would all play out when I first met all of the characters. And, yes, while this is a self-proclaimed “classic love story,” (a label which basically lets you know how the story will end) the twists and turns that happened to get to that point were often surprising. The biggest plus of *A Wife* for me, by far, was the last 20% of the read, which pulled this novel back from the abyss for me. Without giving anything away, one of the pivotal turning points in the novel did make me respect, if not like, Vivienne a little more.

Vivienne is a character who is considered by all in her sphere to be beautiful. All she has ever been—or accomplished—in life is being “beautiful,” thus her aspirations in life go hand-in-hand with that. She struggles against this internally, but it’s not as deep as it sounds. Really, she’s trying to decide if being a Texas gold-digger is really her calling—though she still hasn’t settled on whether or not she would consider herself to be such. Enter her gentlemen callers--the men in her life who have similar views on her shown in polarizing ways but who end up shaping the way that she views herself and what she wants from her own life.

Now, I must say that in reviewing *A Wife of Noble Character*, I realized that the problem I had with it was the packaging. It all began and ended, so to speak, with the packaging! Reading it, I wanted it to be more; I wanted it to live up to the lovely wrapping that it was dressed and presented in, but it didn’t—not for me. This wasn’t some poignant and charmingly funny Edith Wharton spin-off—some modernized version that still had some intellectual bite. No, this was pure chick lit, highlighted by the fact that the protagonist, Vivienne, seemed to want sympathy and commiseration for the everyday life hardships that she experienced, as if she were somehow exempt from real-world issues. Oh my God, you poor thing--you have bills? You have to figure out how to get a job? ~~Oh, I'm so sorry for you!~~ Or not. (Enter borderline shopaholic heroine who frets over whether or not to flat iron her hair. Oh Lord, there's nothing more annoying than a whiny and entitled protagonist!!) Aggravating, but often true of chick lit, which is why had I known that this was behind door #1, I would’ve run in the other direction for sure. More importantly, I can’t imagine that this won’t be an issue for this novel to some extent in the future. How are readers of chick lit who might really enjoy this read to know that they’ve found their match if it isn’t packaged correctly? And how many readers will be annoyed to no end (raising hand now) once they figure out that they’ve been duped by a literarily slanted book flap and cover?

Meanwhile, this one started out in one of the strangest manners I’ve come across in a while. It just dropped the reader in, right in the middle of a college campus quad, not knowing who the characters were or where their motivations lay. I felt like I’d stumbled into the middle of something and had a hard time getting into the swing of things in those first few chapters, because I kept feeling that maybe I’d missed something—that the format of the first chapter had been purposeful and not just awkwardly done. Character entrances like that *can* work well and make the reader feel that they’re really in the middle of the action! But this just felt like I’d started the read in the middle of chapter 2.

All in all, if you’re looking for glimpses of Edith Wharton, you won’t find her here. That I can promise you (if you’re like me and you think something like “Afterward” [1910] when you think Wharton). Nevertheless, the writing was energetic and buoyant in its WASPiness—in the same vein as other recent releases *The Nest* and *Eligible*. Of course, it exploited every cliché of Texas life you’ve ever heard—trust me, I know, being

born and raised in Texas. But clichés are clichés for a reason, so sometimes they work well when re-examined, re-purposed, re-done, re-imagined, but I didn't see much of that here. If pushed just a tad further it could've been satire in some areas, but it fell a little short in that department too. I felt like I knew these characters and understood them, because their motives were simple. But I never felt for them or rooted for them. Really, I was just watching them and their drama play out but never felt a part of it, never felt invested in the outcome.

So, between the light-heartedness of the narrative and the mild feeling of being duped, *A Wife* grabbed herself 3 stars that would've been shaky at best if not for the pivot it took toward the end. 3 stars ***

The Navi Review | Twitter | Instagram

Sadie Forsythe says

Lordy, I struggled with this one. I set it aside so many times. In fact, I read five other books between starting it and finishing it. I'll say up front that I felt it redeemed itself in the end, but for most of the book I could not relate to Vivienne. I disliked her intensely.

I understood what Puig was highlighting with the positions Vivienne found herself in and the way she thought and what she did to survive, but it all made my skin crawl. It's the sort of feeling I actively avoid in my life, so it was very hard for me to face it through Vivienne.

However, the writing is beautiful. The characters are ones you'll recognize, even as you hate them. And, as I said, I liked the end. Honestly, it probably deserves more than a 3 star, but FOR ME, that's the best I can do.

Lorilin says

Vivienne Cally is a lot of things. She's beautiful, and that's what everyone notices first. She comes from a good family and carries herself like she does. And she knows how to get people to like her (even if it requires compromising herself every now and then). From the outside, Vivienne appears to have a charmed and privileged life.

But, in reality, she's not doing so hot. Her parents died when she was very young, and she's been raised by her cold and withholding grandmother ever since. Even though she socializes with Houston's wealthy elite, the truth of the matter is that Vivienne doesn't have money like they do. In fact, she's racked up a whole lot of debt trying to keep up with her friends. And the only solution to her financial problems that she's been taught is to find a rich man, marry him, and start popping out babies. The book follows Vivienne over a two-year period as she tries to figure out what she wants, who she wants, and, finally, who she is when she doesn't get either.

If you've read *The House of Mirth*, this story will sound familiar. Many of the relationship dynamics that Vivienne experiences in this book--both with friends and with romantic partners--sound a lot like the relationships Lily Bart has in *House of Mirth*. Lots of rich friends from old money and men who are after that one thing. The ending is better, at least. But just barely.

It took me a while to get into this book, though I did really like the second half. What threw me off was the book's tone. The author tells most of the story in an overly-formal, stuffy way, kind of like a Jane Austen novel. But then Vivienne also drops f-bombs and talks about anal sex. There were more than a few moments when I read something and thought, "Wow, that came out of nowhere. It doesn't make sense that this character would say that." The inconsistency ruined the flow and believability of the story for me.

Ultimately, *A Wife of Noble Character* ended up being a more enjoyable read than I thought it was going to be, but it still never knocked my socks off. If you really like *House of Mirth*, though, (and I didn't), you may like this one more than I did.

ARC received through Amazon Vine. See more of my reviews at www.BugBugBooks.com.

Taryn says

This book was inspired by *House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton, which I haven't read. As a lifelong resident of Southeast Texas, I was really interested in the Houston setting of this modern version. I enjoyed the writing, the sense of place, and the social commentary, but I wasn't sold on the love story.

The key to unhappiness—always wantin' to be somewhere else instead of where you are.

Thirty-year-old Vivienne is the last heir to the Cally Petroleum fortune. While the Cally name remains influential, the fortune has dwindled. Vivienne always thought that there was a certain script to her life, but she's starting to think that she wants more out of life. Preston Duffin has known Vivienne since childhood and their social circles intersect. He thinks Vivienne is the most beautiful woman he has ever seen and that she can be so much more than she is. Vivienne is stirred by the way Preston makes her think about her life differently and how he awakens a different part of her, a part that she is not entirely comfortable with.

"[Her parents] loved each other enough at one point to marry and make a life—her own life—so she couldn't only be the product of loss and collapse. The resolution would be a happy, comfortable married life for herself, with years of love to counteract all the fighting."

Vivienne is trying to figure out her place in life and I liked her willingness to question her life's course. With no actual money to her name, she decides she can either marry a wealthy man or start mingling with the lower classes. The divergence of her values with her social circle's become more and more apparent; she is comfortable with her sexuality and sees faith as a more personal endeavor. She starts to feel like there could be more to life than social engagements and finding a husband to support her. On the flip side, she has always had money or prominence to fall back on, so she has never had to deal with consequences or the invisibility that comes with being poor

Religion seemed to be a thing he kept in a special compartment in his brain for the sake of sometimes acting serious, because that was the way he thought Men should be. In this

compartment he also kept his opinions on the way Women should be. There was a time for hunting and a time for Jesus, but as far as Vivienne could tell, Jesus was never available during hunting hours, or work hours, and certainly not during the hours he spent receiving blow jobs from her. In the three months, they'd been dating Vivienne had picked up that he had low expectations and little respect for the women he'd had sex with (and from what Vivienne had heard, there'd been many), but of women he took seriously, he expected angelic behavior and the same compartmentalized devotion to Jesus.

I have recently read Everybody Rise and Eligible, which are also modern takes on classic novels with WASPy women on the search for wealthy husbands. I rate A Wife of Noble Character firmly in the middle. **It's not over-the-top ridiculous like Eligible, but it has more humor and a more introspective heroine than Everybody Rise.** The story alternates between the perspectives of Vivienne and Preston, but it's mostly from Vivienne's perspective. **I did not connect to the story immediately; I wasn't interested until the 10% point when Vivienne begins to interact with her friends at a Memorial Day party.**

It was tough living without Texas, even in a place as great as Paris. Still, he was reluctant. It was Texas, after all, and again. He felt very paradoxical and grumpy when he thought about it, remembering vividly all the things he couldn't stand about it (he ran through his top three: guns, humidity, mosquitos) and how puffy and grand he'd felt in leaving it, and yet—and yet what? Well, he just missed it.

The main reason I chose this book is that it's set in Houston. It is fun to be able to picture the actual setting, rather than Generic Boulevard #3. There are some fun bits of Texas history mentioned too! The personalities portrayed were so familiar to me: the "devout" boyfriend with inconsistent views on sex, the good 'ol boy businessman, and the sassy, folksy mom full of sexist advice. **I loved the book most when it was in social commentary mode.** At one point Vivienne commits a social faux pax and the advice to rectify the situation is simultaneously amusing and horrifying. I also laughed at the ultimate East Texas argument-ender: "I'm not gonna debate Scripture with you." One of my favorite characters in the book was from my hometown of Beaumont. This character is wise, has a great sense of perspective, and fled Beaumont as soon as she could! ;) (For reference, the Beaumont-Port Arthur area was ranked 6th on MarketWatch's list of miserable cities.) Another favorite was Vivienne's frenemy Karlie, a lifestyle blogger with a mean streak.

Nothing in her experience had prepared her for being kissed by a man with whom she couldn't see her life spelled out, should she choose to spend her life with him. His kiss opened a door in her mind, as most kisses did, except she couldn't see past the door into the next month and year and decade. She couldn't even see the next day—not even, she realized, the next hour.

My least favorite part was the romantic drama between Vivienne and Preston. I never felt that their history was authentic and I didn't want the ending I was supposed to want. I really disliked being inside Preston's head. He gives off a "nice guy" vibe. The book opens with Preston and Vivienne running into each other at Rice University quad. They go back to his apartment and he proceeds to analyze and critique her life. "He was always jabbing her, questioning her, finding fault with her desires." His behavior and hypocrisy are

eventually addressed, but **I didn't ever see a reason for these two people to be so enchanted with each other. We only directly witness three major interactions between them before they are separated:** 1) the aforementioned quad conversation 2) a few hours together at a Memorial Day party 3) lustful moments at her best friend's wedding. Preston has a fixation on Vivienne's beauty and seems to like who she could be more than who she is. **I might have grudgingly accepted the ending, but I was disappointed by the epilogue.* It didn't feel earned.** However, I did think the last line was a nice touch.

We're all trying to be braver and more compassionate people than we are, and when this is too much to ask of ourselves, at least we're trying. I think it means something to try.

While I didn't like the romance, I liked Vivienne and I felt compelled to keep reading and see how her story was going to end. People who liked or almost liked Everybody Rise will enjoy this book. I'm going to give myself a break from this genre.

The changes that had brought her back here instead felt as subtle as the changes in the big trees arching against the pink sky. They looked no different to her eye, but the time had breathed through them as well.

I received this book for free from Henry Holt and Company & NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review. The publication date is August 2, 2016

(EDIT: Replaced 6/22 mini-review on 8/2.)

Rae Meadows says

I loved reading this full-blown, Texas twist on House of Mirth. (You had me at Edith Wharton.) What an assured debut. Puig creates a rich and vibrant world of Houston's moneyed elite, and the intricate manners that these young women have to navigate. Although the cover copy calls it a comedy, it didn't read as a comedy to me. There are amusing parts, and clever lines, but I found the novel full of pathos. The world of Vivienne (and her terrible friends) is totally compelling and surprising, well-drawn and convincing. I feel like I took a trip to a surreal side of Houston. A tidy ending is not usually my thing, but I went with it, and enjoyed the satisfaction of how the author brought the strands together. I look forward to Puig's future books!

Kelsey says

I absolutely loved this book! I can definitely see the links between Wharton's The House of Mirth, however, this book definitely stands on its own. The coming of age aspect, along with the theme of navigating complex social circles was both entertaining and thought provoking. This was my favorite read of the year by far, and I could not put it down. I highly recommend this novel for readers looking for an excellent plot and well developed characters as well as a novel that challenges societal norms.

Lianna says

For me, *A Wife of Noble Character* was one of those novels that completely snuck up on me. I hadn't expected much from this loose adaptation of Edith Wharton's *House of Mirth* but I am pleasantly surprised to say that I enjoyed it immensely.

In the novel we meet Vivienne Cally, a 30 year old Texan who runs in the wealthiest of circles, even when her own wealth is balanced on her name alone. Orphaned as a child, she's been told to rely on her beauty and find a successful Texas husband as soon as possible. The problem is however, that deep down Vivienne wants to be more than a social climber and arm candy and her carefully constructed world is never more tested than when she spends time with Preston Duffin. Preston, soon to be architect who has circles Vivienne and her group of friends ship childhood, has always found himself drawn to Vivienne. The problem is will their desires and differences drawn them closer together or fling them further apart.

It's mostly characterization where I find pitfalls in these types of novels. I enjoy a good story about characters with flaws who struggle, like all of us, with their place in life. However, it's a delicate balance between making your characters flawed and making them entirely unlikeable. Puig has done a wonderful job in this novel of creating characters that you can easily become invested in. Vivienne's introspective view of her world, her struggle with loss and trying to balance what she wants with what she needs were all themes that struck a chord with me and made me want to read more. My only issue with this novel (and what made me flounder between 3.5 and 4 stars) was that I wish there was more development between Preston and Vivienne. They were obviously drawn to each other, but I don't think the reader got a full view of the progression of their feelings - what and why they were connected.

emily says

Really, startlingly shallow.

Maybe the heavy comparisons to *House of Mirth* were a bad choice. Who are they supposed to work for? If you're a Wharton fan, you're not going to find much going on here. If you're the target reader for this kind of thing, though, you're probably not looking for the depth of character (and use of language) that EW would provide. Bad move, everyone.

Jaclyn Day says

Incredibly lightweight take on Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*. The characters are fantastically shallow and the story is stretched to within an inch of believability to keep up with Wharton's original text. I love an easy read, but wouldn't recommend this one to a friend.

Sarah Wagner says

I received this book through LibraryThing Early Reviewers.

While inspired by Edith Wharton, this novel equally reminded me of some of Jane Austen's novels. Vivienne, a young (but not for much longer) lady of good family but no fortune, must navigate the treacherous water of Texas high society in order catch a wealthy husband who will support her extravagant lifestyle. However, this is a modern tale as much as it emulates the classics, and in it, Vivienne must face some harsh realities about life and work and living on one's own. In so many ways, this novel resonates with what it means to be young today and struggling with finding work and making one's own way.

Ruthie Jones says

A Wife of Noble Character is melancholy and lovely. At first, disliking Vivienne and dismissing her as shallow and always ready to use her good looks to get what she wants is easy. As the story progresses, Vivienne's character flows into a different context as she struggles to maintain the expectations of her family name but without the money that has traditionally kept that name in all the right circles. Vivienne is flawed, but her development as a character is realistic and muddled and noble.

The pivotal moment (for me, at least) is Waverly's wedding, where Vivienne is the Maid of Honor. Vivienne's explosive encounter with the oh-so-unsuitable Preston on this night is quite a turning point in Vivienne's life. This volta sends Vivienne in new and unfamiliar directions that include the clutches of a high-paying job with strings attached, Paris to assess an ex-pat's artwork (but maybe to be near Preston as well), Switzerland to regroup because her life is officially in shambles, and new levels of self awareness and self appreciation. Vivienne finally finds her voice when she is in Paris, but she has a long way to go before she finally lands on solid ground.

Vivienne's friend Bladimir is definitely my favorite character. He is a true friend because he is brutally honest and unceasingly caring. The contrast between Bladimir and Vivienne's friend Karlie is stark and poignant.

The writing in A Wife of Noble Character is quite literary and draws you into its depths and dimensions. The plot and writing style have an old-fashioned tone, so the explicit sexual references and scenes are startling. On the other hand, the sex and occasional crudity are realistic elements and have a fundamental place in this story.

The relationship between Vivienne and Preston is frustrating throughout. Both are stubborn and quick to judge and slow to act. This dynamic inches the story toward the perfect epilogue, which left me tearfully smiling and giddy.

A Wife of Noble Character will leave you breathless and contemplating what it means to be a true friend to your friends, to your family, and to yourself throughout all of life's storms and messy everyday moments.

My favorite quote: "... you lose what you love when you don't love it enough."

Thank you to Lone Star Book Blog Tour and publisher Henry Holt & Company for providing me with a

copy of A Wife of Nobel Character by Yvonne Georgina Puig in exchange for my honest review.
