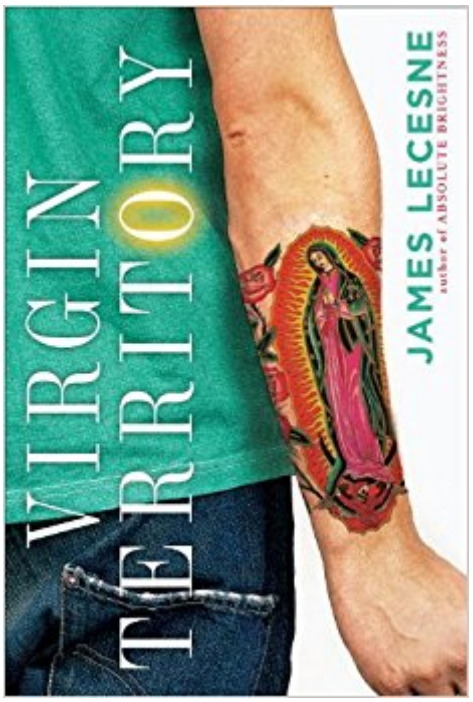
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Virgin Territory



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Synopsis

Virgin Territory explores the power of faith and our need to believe in miracles. Sixteen-year-old Dylan Flack is uprooted from his cozy life in New York City by the death of his mother of cancer the night before 9/ll. He finds himself transplanted to Jupiter, Florida, and in the chaos of the move discovers that his father has lost their treasured collection of family photos.Ã Â Dylan feels that he has begun to lose the memory of his mother's face,Ã Â and without access to those pictures of their past together, each day stretches darkly into a future without hope. Enter: the Virgin Club, a nomadic group of trailer kids whose mostly single parents drag them all over the country in search of sightings of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Although not looking for membership in any club, Dylan falls in love with their leader, Angela, who believes that change occurs in direct proportion to desire and the willingness to take risks. In a series of misadventures and brushes with the law in what Dylan comes to think of as "virgin territory," she teaches Dylan to risk a future without his favorite parent.Ã Â Miraculously his newfound courage leads to a long overdue confession from his father that brings them closer together and catapults Dylan into a future that holds more promise.

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Grade 9 UpÃ¢â ¬â •When the golf course where he caddies for the summer closes due to mobs

that follow the appearance of a tree blotch that looks remarkably like the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dylan finds himself involved with new friends in surprising escapades. Since the death of his mother, he and his father left New York City for Jupiter, FL, trying to reinvent their lives. Doug tries to live up to his obligations as father of Dylan and son of Marie, in whose house they live. Marie slips in and out of lucidity and is regularly on the lam from the nursing home that provides her care. Now that the town is being invaded by the followers of sightings of the Virgin Mary, Dylan take up with exotic newcomer Angela and her pals DesirÃƒÂ©e and Crispy. These kids are not bad, but they do some things that are fairly thoughtless, discovering along the way the consequences of their actions and gaining insight into their motivations and those of the adults who should be in charge, but clearly are not. Eclectic in spirit, exploring sexual desire, pondering the mysterious connections between people, there's nothing religious here, despite the title. Nor is virginity the topic, although Dylan loses his. It's just Lecesne gently laying bare both the humor and pain that accompany love and loss.Ã¢â ¬â •Carol A. Edwards, Denver Public Library, CO (c) Copyright 2011. Ã Â Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Dylan Flack moved from New York City to Florida after his motherÃ¢â ¬â„¢s death, and 10 years later, life still seems up in the air. With his dad, Doug, Dylan lives in his grandmother MarieÃ¢â ¬â„¢s house, now empty since she moved to the nursing home she continuously runs away from. Dylan is spending a boring summer caddying until an image of the Virgin Mary appears on a golf-course tree. With the icon comes crowds, including new friends, who open up DylanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s very closed life. Although Mary on the tree is more of a plot point than a presence, the mysteries of faith, love, and remembrance stream through the story. Marie, who has AlzheimerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s, remembers what it was like to really live; the memories of Angela, a beautiful newcomer, shift often, or perhaps she is just changing her story; and Doug wants his sonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s affection, but itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s his mother Dylan truly loves and desperately needs to remember. Questions are asked, and some are answered, in a story that flows through DylanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s realistic voice. For those craving more, there are meaningful moments to be pondered, too. Grades 7-10. --Ilene Cooper

We've all heard of the people who find Jesus or The Virgin Mary in a grilled cheese or a slice of toast. We've heard of these things becoming internet phenomena, being sold on eBay, attracting millions.VIRGIN TERRITORY, the latest from James Lecesne, is the story of a guy who gets wrapped up in the latest Blessed Virgin Mary hullabaloo when her face supposedly appears on a

tree at the half-rate golf course where he works as a caddy. Of course, Dylan -- named for Bob Dylan, his mom’s favorite poet and singer -- is confused that so many people from around the country would travel to Jupiter, Florida to see the BVM (as her followers sometimes call her) and ask for a miracle. To Dylan, it’s just a tree with a funny scar on it. But then he meets Angela, a girl unlike any girl he has ever met. And she inducts him into the Virgin Club, a club with two rules: You must "a) want something and b) take a risk."Together, Dylan, Angela, Desiree, and Crispy begin a summer of mischief. Which is fine with Dylan -- he’s had nothing to do since his father, Doug, took away his computer and with it his internet access, due to certain indiscretions with a much older and sexily screennamed e-pal. And aside from Doug and his grandmother who lives in the place due to her quickly progressing Alzheimer’s, it’s not like Dylan has anyone else to hang out with. He hasn’t heard from his supposed best friend in weeks. So The Virgin Club it is.Soon, though, Dylan realizes that he’s falling in love with Angela, and Crispy is telling him she can’t be trusted. Dylan’s grandfather, Marie, is escaping the place more often than usual, resulting in city-wide searches for the elderly woman. And Dylan’s boss, a former golf pro just one slip away from his next stint in rehab, is willing to do just about anything to get the "Holy Rollers" off his property so he can get back to business as usual. It’s not long before Dylan starts to empathize with the BVM-followers, realizing that all these people have a story. Remembering his mom, Kat, who died when he was little, changing his life for ever, Dylan has to wonder how their lives would have been different if she were still around.This is a lovely story, filled with charm and insight, with a fun and eclectic cast of characters who feel like your friends by the time you turn the last page. The setting is brilliant -- you can almost feel the humidity of Jupiter, Florida as you read, following The Virgin Club’s antics. Not quite a love story, not quite a family drama, VIRGIN TERRITORY is an entertaining and heartfelt look at a pocket of our culture that so often gets swept under the rug. It’s definitely worth checking out!

You’ve seen the reports on the news -- the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary appears on a grain elevator or on a grilled cheese sandwich. Well, it has happened on a Florida golf course where Dylan Flack works as a caddy, and the whole thing is about to throw his life into a tailspin.Dylan and his dad left New York City after his mother’s death. It wasn’t his idea, but his dad thought it would be good to start over somewhere new. Mr. Flack left his videographer job and now works as a landscaper, perhaps in an effort to bury his problems instead of facing them. Dylan is along for the ride and trying to make the best of it.Named after Bob Dylan by his poet mother, Dylan has never been very close to his dad. Now, enough time has passed since his mother’s death that he is

disturbed to realize he is unable to remember her face. The fact that his father left all the family photos behind in New York City hasn't helped their father/son relationship. Dylan's job caddying at the golf course is about the only thing getting him through the summer.When the figure of the Virgin Mary is discovered in the bark of one of the golf course's trees, everyone begins to descend on the sleepy little town of Jupiter, Florida. That's when Dylan meets Angela. She is one of several teens who arrive in town because their mothers are Virgin Mary groupies. They follow what they call the BVM sightings like roadies following a rock band.The teens welcome Dylan into their group and use his knowledge of the local area to create interesting entertainment to while away the time until their parents move them to the next location. Dylan is struck by Angela's beauty and drawn by her risk-taking behavior. He has hopes that with her around the summer might offer more than attempting to please his father and helping old guys cart around their golf gear. For him, the appearance of the Virgin on the tree may be a "blessing" of another kind.VIRGIN TERRITORY by James Lecesne is a quirky tale of one young man's struggle to face his mother's death and form some sort of bond with a father he doesn't really understand. While many are struggling to "see" the Virgin in the tree bark, Dylan and his father are struggling to figure out what's next for them after losing the one connection that held everything together.Reviewed by: Sally Kruger, aka "Readingjunky"

So, yeah. I had a really hard time with this book. It sounded like an interesting premise about faith, redemption, love, and longing. That's what it was about, in the end, but the execution was very poor. I felt like the author was trying to make Dylan deeper than he really was and that all Dylan's crazy thinking was just a distraction from the non-story. The tone was so jumpy from one extreme to the next that I had a hard time keeping up. Not to mention that Angela just frustrated me beyond belief!! She was quite shallow and her actions spoke much louder about her motives and character than her words ever did.Honestly, I'd have to say that unless you really want to try it, I'd pass on this book. It just wasn't my cup of tea. There is an audience for every book and unfortunately I did not fall into that category for this one.

This is one of the best YA novels I've read in a while.Funny, sharp, well-charactered, insightful. Plenty of ambiguity but plenty of lessons learned, too.I have read out loud a number of sections to my high school book group and they have agreed with my about the writing. James Lecesne has given us an everyman in Dylan Flack that we can all relate to. I think we have all met our share of Angelas. I loved the portrayal of his father and the motivations that Dylan reads into his father's

behavior. Also his crazy grandmother. Was Frankie Rey real? Is Pluto not a planet just ’cause someone says so? It’s always good when a YA author quotes Walt Whitman in their novel. See Paper Towns by John Green, another great example of great YA fiction. I think James Lecesne may deserve the Michael Printz Award for this one.

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