



# The Root of Wild Madder: Chasing the History, Mystery, and Lore of the Persian Carpet

*Brian Murphy*

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*Wisdom of a Turkmen proverb.*

*The Root of Wild Madder* opens with an invitation that flows from the same ancient inspiration. "A carpet is poetry itself," an Iranian carpet merchant declares to author Brian Murphy. "You just have to learn to read them." So begins a journey. It follows Persian carpets from the remote villages of Afghanistan and Iran where they are woven -- often by young girls -- and on to the bazaars where they are traded, to the Sufis and mystic poets who find grace and magic in their timeless designs, and, finally and unexpectedly, to a carpet showroom in New York.

Told in exquisite prose befitting one of the world's loveliest art forms, *The Root of Wild Madder* eloquently chronicles how carpets embody humanity's endless striving for unattainable perfection. Here are stories of the weavers and their dreams, the "mules" who move the carpets from place to place, the tradesmen who sell them in the bazaars, and the refugee compelled to trade a carpet he believes contains the soul of his grandmother -- because his family must eat.

The madder plant has fed the carpets' red brilliance since the earliest weavings. But the power of its palette, like the dyers' traditions, threatens to pass from memory. It would be a profound loss. It's part of a world as rich as any sublime carpet: steeped in spirituality, culture, allegory, and, above all, mystery. Nearly all the carpet masterworks are anonymous art for the ages, and Murphy seeks out their glorious hidden narratives. As he observes, "Every carpet carries its own distinctive voice. Suddenly I wanted to hear them."

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