



The Pearl That Broke Its Shell: A Novel

By Nadia Hashimi

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The Pearl That Broke Its Shell: A Novel By Nadia Hashimi

Afghan-American Nadia Hashimi's literary debut novel is a searing tale of powerlessness, fate, and the freedom to control one's own fate that combines the cultural flavor and emotional resonance of the works of Khaled Hosseini, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Lisa See.

In Kabul, 2007, with a drug-addicted father and no brothers, Rahima and her sisters can only sporadically attend school, and can rarely leave the house. Their only hope lies in the ancient custom of *bacha posh*, which allows young Rahima to dress and be treated as a boy until she is of marriageable age. As a son, she can attend school, go to the market, and chaperone her older sisters.

But Rahima is not the first in her family to adopt this unusual custom. A century earlier, her great-great grandmother, Shekiba, left orphaned by an epidemic, saved herself and built a new life the same way.

Crisscrossing in time, *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* interweaves the tales of these two women separated by a century who share similar destinies. But what will happen once Rahima is of marriageable age? Will Shekiba always live as a man? And if Rahima cannot adapt to life as a bride, how will she survive?

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The Pearl That Broke Its Shell: A Novel By Nadia Hashimi Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #15884 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2015-01-06
- Released on: 2015-01-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .77" w x 5.31" l, 1.57 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 480 pages

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Editorial Review

From Booklist

Starred Review Hashimi's first novel tells the story of two young Afghan women, separated by a century, who disguise themselves as boys in order to survive. In 2007, nine-year-old Rahima, the middle child among five daughters, becomes a *bacha posh*, a girl who dresses as a boy so that she can run to the market and escort her sisters when they leave the house. Rahima enjoys incredible freedoms as a boy, from attending school to roughhousing with children her age, but it all comes to an abrupt end when Abdul Khaliq, a vicious warlord, decides he wants her for his wife. Only 13 when she's forced to marry Abdul Khaliq, Rahima draws her strength from her aunt's tales of her ancestor Shekiba, who as a young girl was scarred by kitchen oil and was reviled by her extended family after the death of her parents and siblings. Shekiba eventually found unlikely refuge in the king's palace in Kabul, dressing as a man to guard the king's harem. Alternating between Rahima and Shekiba's stories, Hashimi weaves together two equally engrossing stories in her epic, spellbinding debut. --Kristine Huntley

Review

"Nadia Hashimi has written, first and foremost, a tender and beautiful family story. Her always engaging multigenerational tale is a portrait of Afghanistan in all of its perplexing, enigmatic glory, and a mirror into the still ongoing struggles of Afghan women." (Khaled Hosseini, author of *And the Mountains Echoed* and *The Kite Runner*)

"A fascinating look at the unspoken lives of Afghani women, separated by generations and miles, yet achingly similar. This is a story to transport you and make you think." (Shilpi Somaya Gowda, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Secret Daughter*)

"Hashimi weaves together two equally engrossing stories in her epic, spellbinding debut." (Booklist (starred review))

From the Back Cover

A luminous and unforgettable tale of two women, destiny, and identity in Afghanistan

Kabul, 2007: The Taliban rules the streets. With a drug-addicted father and no brothers, Rahima and her sisters can rarely leave the house or attend school. Their only hope lies in the ancient Afghan custom of *bacha posh*, which allows young Rahima to dress and be treated as a son until she is of marriageable age. As a boy, she has the kind of freedom that was previously unimaginable . . . freedom that will transform her forever.

But Rahima is not the first in her family to adopt this unusual custom. A century earlier, her great-great-grandmother Shekiba, left orphaned by an epidemic, saved herself and built a new life in the same way—the change took her on a journey from the deprivation of life in a rural village to the opulence of a king's palace in the bustling metropolis of Kabul.

Crisscrossing in time, *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* interweaves the stories of these two remarkable women who are separated by a century but share the same courage and dreams.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Arthur West:

As people who live in the actual modest era should be update about what going on or data even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era which is always change and make progress. Some of you maybe can update themselves by reading books. It is a good choice for you personally but the problems coming to an individual is you don't know which one you should start with. This *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell: A Novel* is our recommendation to help you keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and need in this era.

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