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A Bitter Veil

by Libby Fischer Hellmann



About the Book

It all began with a line of Persian poetry...

Anna and Nouri, both studying in Chicago, fall in love despite their very different backgrounds. Anna, who has never been close to her parents, is more than happy to return with Nouri to his native Iran, to be embraced by his wealthy family. Beginning their married life together in 1978, their world is abruptly turned upside down by the overthrow of the Shah, and the rise of the Islamic Republic.

Under the Ayatollah Khomeini and the Republican Guard, life becomes increasingly restricted and Anna must learn to exist in a transformed world, where none of the familiar Western rules apply. Random arrests and torture become the norm, women are required to wear hijab, and Anna discovers that she is no longer free to leave the country.

As events reach a fevered pitch, Anna realizes that nothing is as she thought, and no one can be trusted?not even her husband.

Discussion Guide

1. Do you remember the Iran Revolution of the late 1970s? If so, what are some of your memories of that time?

2. If you had to use five words to describe Iran, what would they be? Do you think these words are different from the ones you would have used before reading this book?

3. Were you surprised by the identity of Nouri?s murderer? If so, as you were reading along, who were you thinking was the murderer?

4. The theme of family is key to this book. If Anna had not had such a difficult, distant relationship with her parents do you think she would have been as likely to go to Iran with Nouri?

5. In a time of conflict, how important is it to remember that the individual people in a country are quite different and separate from their government? Is it important to understand and appreciate the culture of another country if we are in conflict with them?

6. Do you think that American authors should write novels about other countries? How do you think their perspective as an author flavors their work?

7. How would you handle yourself if you were in Anna?s situation?

8. How do you think Anna will feel about her time with Nouri when she looks back on it in her later life? Does it help her to understand him once Baba-joon explains his psychology and motives?

9. What do you think is the significance of the title A Bitter Veil?

10. How would you feel if you lived in a culture where women were forced to cover themselves in public?

11. Has this novel given you a deeper appreciation for Iran, in terms of its geography, architecture, and culture? Are you interested in learning more about Iran now?

12. The Iranian protests depicted in the book---both in Chicago and in Iran---can be seen as similar to the current Occupy protests. How do you think they are the same or different?

Author Bio

Libby Fischer Hellmann left a career in broadcast news in Washington, DC and moved to Chicago a long time ago, where she, naturally, began to write gritty crime fiction. She soon began writing historical fiction as well. Eighteen novels and nearly 30 short stories later, she claims they?ll take her out of the Windy City feet first. She has been nominated for many awards in the mystery and crime writing community and has even won a few.

She has been a finalist twice for the Anthony and the Shamus Awards; four times for *Foreword Magazine*?s Book of the Year, which she won in 2018. She also has been nominated for the Agatha and the Daphne, and she won the Chicago Writers Association Book of the Year in 2021. She has won the IPPY, *Foreword Magazine*?s Indie Awards, and the Readers Choice Award multiple times.

Libby was the President of Sisters in Crime in 2006. For two years she hosted ?Solved,? a streaming video show featuring bestselling and emerging Crime Authors. She also was the host of ?Second Sunday Crime,? a podcast with the Authors on the Air network. Episodes of both shows are on Libby?s YouTube channel.

Critical Praise

"The Iranian revolution provides the backdrop for this meticulously researched, fast-paced stand-alone from Hellmann?this political thriller will please established fans and newcomers alike."

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