

# Caspian Rain

by Gina Barkhordar Nahai

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## About the Book

From the bestselling author of **Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith**, a stirring, lyrical tale that offers American readers a unique insight into Iranian culture.

In the decade before the Islamic Revolution, Iran is a country at the brink of explosion. Twelve-year-old Yaas is born into an already divided family: Her father is the son of wealthy Iranian Jews who are integrated into the country's upper-class, mostly Muslim, elite; her mother was raised in the slums of South Tehran, one street away from the old Jewish ghetto.

Yaas spends her childhood navigating the many layers of Iranian society. Her task, already difficult, becomes all the more critical when her father falls in love with a beautiful woman from a noble Muslim family. As her parents' marriage begins to crumble and the country moves ever closer to revolution, Yaas is plagued by a terrifying genetic illness that is slowly robbing her of her hearing. Facing the prospect of complete deafness, Yaas learns that her father is about to abandon her and her mother, and so she undertakes a desperate, last-ditch effort to save herself and her family.

At once a cultural exploration of an as-yet unfamiliar society, and a psychological study of the effects of loss, **Caspian Rain** takes the reader inside the tragic and fascinating world of a brave young girl struggling against impossible odds.

Filled with hope and despair, **Caspian Rain** is Nahai's most emotional and inspiring novel yet. Nahai's heroine --- the inspired and inspiring Yaas --- learns the lessons of obedience, subservience, and forbearance, and then chooses a surprising and unexpected path.

--- Lisa See, author of **Peony in Love** and **Snow Flower and the Secret Fan**

## Discussion Guide

1. One of the dominant themes in the story is that of Loss: Bahar losing her dreams, Yaas losing her hearing and her father, Ruby losing her lover? How does each character respond to his or her great loss? Is that reaction universal, or is it particular to the place and the culture? How would a Westerner react to a similar loss?
2. Bahar marries Omid thinking it will open for her many doors to opportunity. Instead, she becomes the prisoner of limitations. To what extent are these limitations social and cultural, and to what extent do they spring from her personal shortcomings?
3. Given that Omid's controlling Bahar is not very different from the way other men treat their wives at the time, do you think Omid is particularly cruel? Or can his behavior be understood within the social and historical context of the story?
4. Are there choices for Bahar and Yaas that they do not recognize? Could they take a road, in responding to life's hardships, that they aren't able to see because of their own warped perception?
5. With the exception of Ruby and the Tango Dancer, all the women in the story do their best to abide by the rules of their society. This costs them dearly. But Ruby and the Tango Dancer, who do not respect social mores, also pay a great price for their freedom. Which of the two is the wiser way? Do women everywhere have a better chance of finding happiness by living within traditional boundaries, or by challenging them in favor of greater freedom?
6. Chamedooni carries a suitcase full of hope --- most of it false or misleading. Does he do his clients a service by giving them that hope? Or is he pushing them into the bottomless hole that the Tango Dancer warns Yaas against?
7. Afterward, Yaas is not certain if her father had indeed promised he would take her along to America, or if she had misunderstood him because of her failing hearing. What do you think happened? Would Omid be capable of such cruelty? Or did Yaas hear what she wanted to hear?
8. Knowing what will become of her parents' meeting, Yaas has a choice in the final chapter: she can prevent the meeting, or let Bahar go on to the future that destroys her. Do you agree with the decision she makes?
9. "What is a life, in the end, but a story we leave behind?" Yaas asks. What does she mean by this?
10. How would you answer the question Yaas's other question:  
"What do you do with a loss you can neither cure, nor accept, nor overcome?"

## Author Bio

Gina B. Nahai's *MOONLIGHT ON THE AVENUE OF FAITH* was a number one bestseller in Los Angeles. She is also the author of *CRY OF THE PEACOCK*. She lives in Beverly Hills, California

## Critical Praise

"**Caspian Rain** is a thrill to read. Heartbreak and hope fill the pages. Nahai delves deep into fear, love, jealousy, and obsession --- and with evocative language, and a rich and complex story, takes us to another culture."

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