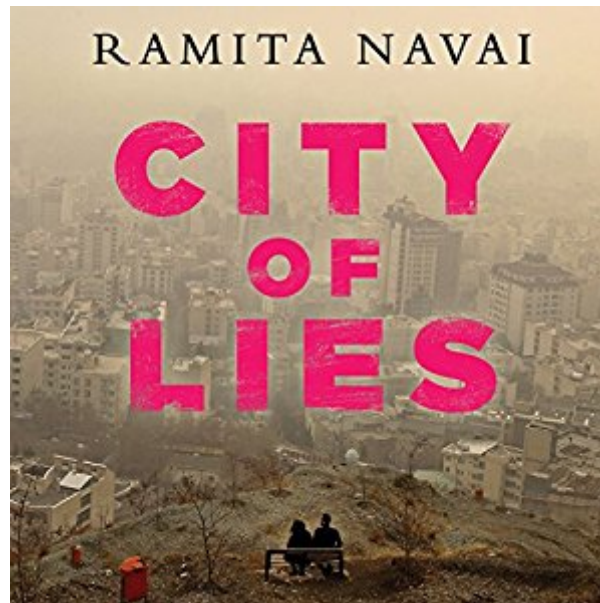




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City Of Lies: Love, Sex, Death, And The Search For Truth In Tehran



Synopsis

Ramita Navai gives voice to ordinary Iranians forced to live extraordinary lives: the porn star, the aging socialite, the assassin and enemy of the state who ends up working for the Republic, the dutiful housewife who files for divorce, and the old-time thug running a gambling den. In today's Tehran, intrigues abound and survival depends on an intricate network of falsehoods: mullahs visit prostitutes, local mosques train barely pubescent boys in crowd-control tactics, and cosmetic surgeons promise to restore girls' virginity. Navai paints an intimate portrait of those discreet recesses in a city where the difference between modesty and profanity, loyalty and betrayal, honor and disgrace is often no more than the believability of a lie.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Being old enough to remember the Pahlavi dynasty and then witness the cultural change, I was eager to compare the stories in this book with my own interactions with Iranians online over the past decade. Just like the author notes, there are official restrictions on internet use -- especially for women -- but most everyone knows ways of getting around them, even in internet cafes. It's a damn weird thing that the US government has its own policy against Iran when Iran has long been willing to work with Washington, just not accept all of Washington's bull hockey that comes with such a relationship (see Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, etc.). Iranians are surprisingly friendly and well educated, and unlike most other people in the Middle East, the first and last words they speak doesn't have to do with the Quran. Navai's accounts illustrate how far Iranians go to live on their own terms, and then put on the mask in public to please the latest religious leaders when needed, much like

Americans straighten up and slow down when the cops are around. I really enjoyed this book and can't wait to read it second time. I gladly recommend it.

Very good storytelling. Having grown up and raised in Tehran until I was 25, It was an enjoyable read for me. As it is mentioned by the author the characters of the short stories are mostly people on the fringe of the society. Although all of the stories can be true (and particularly the source of the stories have been provided by the author at the end of the book was great), my concern is that the image of the Iranian society that the book offers may be a bit exaggerated and superficial. In other word the book does not provide an image of the life of the "ordinary" Iranians of any socioeconomic class. But all that said, it was a fun read.

What is truth? The prologue has a soliloquy about Iranians living different lives, with different levels of truth involved therein. To me, after reading it, it might have been a bit of a glimpse into the authors own handling of the truth in this book. As an American trying to understand the Iranian psyche, this book opens it in a way that I have not seen before. It shows the strains that ordinary Iranians live through, and how their culture is a resilient one -- surviving invasions, revolution, and an oppressive theocracy. Three of the characters have sex featured rather prominently in their stories, and more than a few end in death. Did I believe them all? No. There was a moment where a story seemed so incredible that I had to see if I was reading fiction or non fiction (this is non fiction, btw). An Iranian friend read it, and they thought parts were an outright fabrication (for example, a scene at an airport disagreed with their own personal experience at this airport). But even if the truth is embellished, or stretched, it's all very Iranian. Someone, as I did, might think that Iranians are liars when they first become exposed to their culture. The truth isn't that simple. It's not that they lie, but that they are forced to live with different degrees of truth, and these degrees will color your and their interactions. Read the book if you are at all interested in Iran. I could write paragraphs more about it, but the concepts and emotions that are generated when reading leave me feeling like I have my own gradations of truth to sift through.

Ramita Navai is my hero! I was lucky to visit Ramita's talk in King's College London when I was a student there. She had just launched the publishing of this book and shared stories about how she was collecting these stories, meeting these people, and what it meant for her to write this book. One thing I can say for sure, Ramita has a huge heart, and each character in this book used to be part of her life. She is crafting a story of the city by sharing these stories, and in the end, a beautiful palette

of Tehran's past is present gets created. It became one of my favourite books! If you enjoy Khaled Hosseini, you will definitely like "City of Lies". And if you want to hear more stories by Ramita, look for "Unreported World" episodes with Ramita Navai on YouTube. She is an extremely brilliant journalist and writer! I am very looking forward to reading more of her books.

A fascinating book that should be read by every American. Exposes the reality of life in Tehran: they're just people, like all of us, with the same hopes, fears, goodness and failures as people anywhere. The religion-fueled government tries to pretend that they're better than the rest of us, but instead of turning everyone into saints, they've turned them into liars. Everyone in Tehran lies, hypocrisy abounds. But in the end, the citizens are just doing what we all do: laughing, loving, trying to make a living, stealing, having families, and dying. I normally don't care for short stories, but the stories in this book weave together into a whole that is fascinating. I would have given it five stars except but for one thing: the author "head jumps" too many times, taking you from one person's thoughts into another person's head with no warning. It left me confused a number of times, where I'd have to go back and re-scan and say, Oh, OK, now I'm in this person's head. But in spite of this, it's a page turner, a must-read for anyone interested in Iran and the politics of the region.

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