



Behind The Closed House: A Coming Of Age Historical Romance Novel

Taghreed El Zein

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"A woman's heart-breaking journey to find dignity."

More than a love story . . . more than a coming-of-age novel . . . Behind the Closed House chronicles the journey of a young woman whose struggles mirror those of her beloved country, Afghanistan.

Zulaikha finds post-9/11 Afghanistan a hostile land for women who dream of getting an education and an even more hostile place for those who dare to dream of teaching. She should know. As long as she could remember, she had wanted only one thing—to teach.

Hafeez, once a top-notch freedom fighter who helped to drive the Soviet Union out of the country also discovered that Afghanistan, fast becoming nothing more than the pawn of the Taliban regime senses the change. He is transformed from a well-respected neighbor and friend to an emotionally crippled man following the death of his wife.

Refusing to accept a society in which women are “sold” in marriage, she’s vulnerable as a single woman whose parents have recently died. Despite this, she’s determined that nothing will stop her from proclaiming the human rights of women in this country – and never loses sight of her ultimate dream, to teach.

After a series of tragedies it appears she may have broken free from the mores of the political climate and found true love.

But can either survive the cruelest act of a vengeful madman?

A coming of age historical romance novel which will take you through Zulaikha’s emotional and powerful journey.

Behind The Closed House: A Coming Of Age Historical Romance Novel Details

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Author : Taghreed El Zein

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From Reader Review Behind The Closed House: A Coming Of Age Historical Romance Novel for online ebook

Nequia says

As a female myself, I feel very inspired by this book. "Behind the Closed House", takes you on a heartwarming and impressive journey with a young woman from Afghanistan. She, Zulaikha, finds it problematic to find her own self-respect in her own country. Despite constant tribulation she overcomes and makes life of her own. The author did a great job of merging romance and history. Zulaikha is a very strong woman and I admire her.

Philonous Arkhantos says

Behind the Closed House: A Coming Of Age Historical Romance Novel is touching and sentimental tale written by Taghreed El Zein. Besides having a pretty interesting name, it tells the story of two Afghans who are present during the time of the Taliban uprising. We are introduced to Zulaikha and Hafeez and how the political circumstances of Afghanistan affect their lives. We see Hafeez who was a proud Mujahadeen (freedom fighter) and loving husband and father become a bitter Taliban soldier. We also see Zulaikha struggle being a young woman with aspirations of being an English teacher. Many tragedies befall the characters and the story details the strife of the Afghani people. The novel is written in a very plain language and so there is no cerebral required from the reader. Although, this detail does allow for a quick read and enables it to be more accessible to the general masses who just want an engrossing story. The novel is written from an omniscient narrative perspective which is not common as much nowadays but it is refreshing to see it used. The characterization leaves much to be desired as there are only two types: evil and good. While the characters do have little details about them, like interests and professions, there is not enough to fully flesh them out. This novel does have a strong message and one very reminiscent of the Kite Runner. It paints a much more honest picture of Afghanistan and showed some civility amongst its denizens while also showing how terrible the Taliban was. They are portrayed as just a powerful gang run amok who oppressed the innocent civilians who just wanted peace. The final criticism is that there are some grammatical errors like misspellings and wrongly spaced words. However, these issues are not prevalent enough to make the read unbearable.

Gophergirl58 says

First, let me state that I received this Kindle book free in exchange for reading and leaving an honest review.

To be honest, I had a difficult time getting into the story. The preview of the book states that it was an historical romance, but the romance did not begin until over halfway into the novel. For me, it seemed that two different writing styles were applied: the first few chapters seemed more like a documentary, and then the story began. Additionally, the Kindle version is in need of editing, and in a key part of the book, two men's names were mixed up. SPOILER ALERT! When one of Zulaika's friends is killed during their bolt for freedom, the names of Ali and Jeffar are mixed up several times after Jeffar is killed. There was at least one incomplete sentence, and many run-on words which, at times, slowed me down a bit.

The story itself was simplistic yet heart-wrenching, detailing what Zulaika endured throughout her life. Yet because of her parents, their giving her so much love, support, and encouragement to fulfill her dreams of teaching English to Afghans, Zulaika became a strong woman, one whom others looked to with admiration.

I really wanted to like the story more than I did, but there seemed to be something missing, only I cannot put my finger on it. I do hope that this honest review will not, however, discourage the author. I appreciate being given the opportunity to read this story and review it.

Sirena says

Zulaikha, an intelligent child with educated, spiritual parents was given the gift of a peaceful childhood in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan. When the Soviet Union finally recalls their troops, the repercussions spread far and with terrifying results - the vacuum of power is filled with the rise of the Taliban. No life is left untouched, and this story chronicles the heroine's struggles to survive in a world gone mad, where violence has become an everyday and unavoidable fact of life.

Despite the horrifying laws and brutal punishments that overshadow every aspect of daily life, the author does a fantastic job of emphasizing the hope that endures, even in the darkest of places, and that in the end, love will conquer all.

I personally think that this is a must-read for everyone, if for no other reason than to benefit from the insight into a life far different from that the Western world alone. But for people that enjoy a good historical romance with a different background setting, this one is definitely for you.

Levi Tronnes says

This unique historical and fictional perspective transports the reader to a war torn Afghanistan at the end of the Cold War. The storytelling blends together two narratives allowing the reader to experience the many conflicts and intricacies that individuals faced during this time of strife and upheaval. These two narratives are marked by their own unique personal challenges--including a coming of age story and the desire to overcome the limitations that society places on our choices and freedoms as dreams are pursued. The second narrative, a heart breaking introspective of a man facing a reality and existence that is devoid of everything he believes in and everything that he cherishes, an existence that is about losing not only himself but also the memory of who he was and the memories of his former life. This historical fiction combines intrigue and a unique historical perspective that examines the political and religious strife that have been part of the national development and identity of Afghanistan during the 20th century. With key historical pieces such as the role of the Taliban and the ultra-conservative social policies that shaped Post-Cold War Afghanistan the reader is introduced to new concepts and new ideas that allow you to experience and glimpse an unfamiliar world.

Eryn says

I'm not sure what it was about this book, whether it was the language structure , or the ebook format, or the topic, but I couldn't rouse any interest in it. Every time my kindle opened up to it, I wanted to read something

else. A story about Afghanistan and its people would normally be of great interest to me, but this book wasn't it.

William Bahl says

This is a powerful story about struggle and overcoming adversity.

There is a rich historical journey through the war ravaged country of Afghanistan. Chronicling the Taliban rule throughout, the book offers a glimpse into the life of a woman who overcomes the crushing obstacles of oppression and loss to gain dignity and self-worth. Despite constant adversity she overcomes and makes a life for herself. This is an inspiring story for any reader.

One is taken into a setting that is fragile on the best of days and deadly other times. Families are torn apart, but there is strength in the human will to not just survive, but find a way to thrive. Some readers will appreciate the historical narrative of Afghanistan, as it has struggled with diverse calamities and militarism. Others will find a romance novel, inspiring all to take a chance on life. It is a blending of history and romance.

There are some obvious language barriers, but the story is powerful and well worth the read. I strongly recommend this book to anyone.

Sara Collins says

I received this for free in exchange for a review so I'm gonna have to this a 2 because it says a historical romance when I think of romance I think of all through the book whereas this barely had any til towards the end. I couldn't really get into it.. It's OK but not that great.. If it weren't free I wouldn't have read past the sample I'm sorry.. When you say historical romance add ROMANCE..

Michelle says

Behind the Closed House by Taghreed El Zein is a story about a young woman in Afghanistan after the Mujahideen freedom fighters have ousted the Soviets. Zulaikha wants only one thing, to become an English teacher like her parents before her. That plan is forever altered once the Taliban rises to power.

What follows is a powerful tale of one woman's fight to realize her dreams in a country that is devastated by war and where women are sold as commodities. Zulaikha not only fights to achieve her goals, but she inspires others to seek theirs.

Throughout every page of this engaging novel, the reader feels Zulaikha's sorrow and loss, but also the moments when she triumphs over those who would confine her to their worldview. El Zein creates a character in Zulaikha that is infinitely relatable, but at the same time, the reader finds herself sympathetic to the antagonist's plight as well. Ultimately, this is a novel about the horrors of war and the enduring strength of the human spirit.

Lucile says

Recently I had a chance to review an advance copy of “Behind the Closed House” by Taghreed El Zein. I felt her book deserves a solid four-star rating and will be recommending this to friends.

I am limited in my knowledge of Afghanistan, its history, politics or Muslim religion. After reading El Zein’s book I feel somewhat more aware of the upheaval and changes experienced by the people of that area.

“Behind the Closed House” begins when Zuleika is a happy middle school child with a dream. She wants to follow in the footsteps of her parents and become a teacher. Specifically, she wants to be an English teacher! Zuleika’s family supports her realistic and honorable dream. When the Taliban seizes control everything changes over-night. A bomb kill’s her parents and destroys her home. Bravely she travels alone to find a relative who will take her in.

Far from being safe the cousin sells her to a high member of the Taliban as a replacement wife and mother to his sons. Zuleika experiences violence and sadness as the wife of Hafeez. You must read, for yourself, the story of the many paths and challenges Zuleika must face while trying to follow her dream. You will not be disappointed.

Rebecca McGee says

Given the world’s current political landscape, a story like “Behind the Closed House” offers the reader important perspective on Afghani culture as well as a realistic romantic thread. Zulaikha is our protagonist, an intelligent girl with loving parents who grew up in Afghanistan when it was occupied by Soviet Russia. Through a series of historically accurate tragedies, Zulaikha enters adulthood clinging desperately to her dream of becoming a teacher. Taghreed El Zein depicts characters as real people, with flaws and hopes, and humanizes some people who act inhumanely.

I recommend this book on several levels: one, as a historical novel covering the 1990’s-2000’s, and two, as an uplifting, motivational tale. There are some grammatical errors sprinkled throughout, and a name mix-up, but nothing so serious that takes away from the heart of the book. “Behind the Closed House” is a woman-centered tale about struggle, love, tradition, and hope.

Cat says

This was a beautifully written and inspirational novel. The story follows two very different characters: Hafeez, a recently widowed father faced with making a tough decision to support his family, and Zulaikha, a young woman who struggles to achieve her dreams and find acceptance.

This novel is set during the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan and all of the changes and complications during this tumultuous time back-drop appropriately with the struggles of our main characters.

This novel had a few typos here and there, but overall was written with very lovely language. It skillfully

goes back and forth between the perspectives of the two characters, and later meshes nicely together into one cohesive story.

The voices of the two characters also felt very distinctive, which is not often easy for a writer to accomplish.

Lastly, this novel had a very deep spiritual core which led the characters through their trials and ultimately leaves the reader with a deep sense of inspiration and perseverance.

Chrissy says

This novel was very inspirational. It is the story of how hope, a drive to succeed, and belief in the human spirit can overcome even the largest of roadblocks in life. The novel is set in Afghanistan, mapping out the events before and during the Taliban's rule. The reader follows a young girl named Zulaikha as she dreams of becoming an English teacher. Unfortunately, the rules of the Taliban stand in her way.

Even though there is one central character throughout the novel, the narration is told from different points of view. This was incredibly important to the story as the author's efforts allow the reader to understand the reasoning behind these characters whose lives are so different than the life we experience today. For example, the dream of becoming a teacher seems so mundane, but it really is a struggle for Zulaikha. When all of the characters recognize her as a visionary for wanting to teach, her persistence to her dream becomes all the more real.

This story did have a few typos especially in the first few chapters, but they didn't detract from the overall theme. The beginning was a little ambiguous and confusing, but the story moved very quickly after that, keeping me attached to my Kindle to find out what happened next. The later plot twists were completely unpredictable and kept me on the edge of my seat.

If you seek a traditional historical romance, this book wouldn't be my first stop. Romance isn't the big-ticket item in this story. This book is an awesome read for anyone who enjoys feeling like they are being transported to a different world. I definitely enjoyed reading it!

Ana Oh says

This is an absolutely fantastic story from a developing author. I am looking forward to seeing this author's future endeavors as she continues to develop character POVs and voice.

Danielle Crosby says

This is definitely a slow-burn story. It starts out giving a solid history of the main character Zulaikha, and that of the character that is the catalyst for the major action of the story, Hafeez. I'm not sure I would consider this a historical romance, as there wasn't much in the way of actual romance to the story. However, it was a tale of an amazing woman who defies the odds and overcomes the obstacles put in front of her with leaps, instead of steps. Once the story had the firm foundation of the characters' pasts, things really started

happening quickly! There were even a few surprise plot twists that I definitely didn't see coming! Zulaikha's story is definitely one of perseverance, empowering, and uplifting. I would definitely recommend reading this if you haven't already!
