



Backshadow

Julie Mann

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Some women keep secrets, and some women are kept by their secrets. Like shadows they follow, intimately connected to flesh and blood, a lingering reminder of something past, something dark...

Pinned in India, Japan, and America, BACKSHADOW is the story of three women from three very different worlds. Three whose secrets keep them silent, haunted captives.

When lives ultimately intersect in a San Francisco college creative writing class, the women are drawn into the tentative beginnings of what seems on the surface a most unlikely friendship.

A hard-edged cynic with a load of emotional baggage, much of which happens to be tied to her gender-bending first name, Gregory is the living legacy of a man she'd rather forget: her daddy. Stuck in a life he never wanted, he'd always been determined to make someone pay for his bitterness at circumstance. Until the night she'd had no choice but to step in and stop him.

As a girl of only thirteen, grey-eyed Indian beauty Aneeta is robbed of the one thing she can never get back. By a thief she has both loved and trusted. For years shame keeps her silent. Until the day the balance of power shifts, and she finally finds the courage to speak out. But her revelation unleashes a heart-rending chain of events that see her exiled as a bride to America, and traded from one nightmare into another.

It is duty that prompts Kameko to marry, not choice; her desire to satisfy a dying mother's last wish and to make amends for long ago disappointments. But as she struggles to fulfill an age-old Japanese feminine ideal in a faraway city whose culture is markedly different from what she knows, she begins to question the choices and concessions she has made. It is the cruelest of ironies that finally sets her adrift, like a fallen leaf upon the stream.

By turns heartbreaking and hopeful, BACKSHADOW crosses continents and cultures to consider some of the most provocative, poignant and stigmatizing issues affecting women in the world today. It is the story of three women catching the courage to confront the shadows of the past, and of the comfort that comes from knowing we are not alone.

Backshadow Details

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From Reader Review Backshadow for online ebook

James Taylor says

The author chooses to kick things off with the UN statistic that 1 in 3 women will face abuse in her lifetime. You've been warned! This is a sometimes dark, but very compelling story about some of the hardships women go through. Set in different parts of the world, specifically in different cultures, the reader gets to see how societal pressures can be both defining and confining.

The plot is a fast-moving, interesting, and comes to a plausible and quite a hopeful conclusion. It is interesting to get a bit of a sneak peek into eastern cultures and conventions, but more interesting to see the way the young women come to terms with their past, through the act of writing and through friendship, and begin to carve out a better future. A tale of courage, healing, and hope.

Brooke Sheldon says

This is a story that needs to be shared. Backshadow offers a peek into three separate cultures and the way they shape the young women living within them.

Life is not always pretty for the main characters, in fact, at times it is downright awful. But through all of it they persevere, determined that the future is going to be different.

The last line of the story, from a creative writing assignment one of the main characters submits, puts it this way: Hope is one of the things I choose to keep.

I would recommend Backshadow to anyone who likes strong female characters, a global perspective, and a story with a bit of an edge.

Dale Rominger says

Backshadow is a hard read, by which I mean it deals with difficult subjects. However, the very difficulty leads to a great reward – I often find the more challenging books to be more rewarding. Another way of saying that is: I really liked this book, though at times I found it difficult to read, not because the book is poorly written - it is not! - but because the subject matter is challenging.

It is a story of three women from different cultures. One from Japan, one from India, and one from the United States. Because of difficult and tragic circumstances in their lives they all end up in a writing course in San Francisco.

I keep saying this was a hard read because it is about the treatment of women by some men. Still, from the very beginning I wanted to know what happened to each of the main characters. I quickly became invested in their stories, in their lives, and had to know how things would turn out. Mann portrayed their vulnerability and courage, their weaknesses and strength with skill. Each character is unique and interesting. I was impressed how well, how knowledgably, Mann wrote about the distinct cultures. She has either been to each

of the countries involved or did a lot of research, though I suspect both. Even so, it is not easy to paint cultural pictures in words and Mann does it very well.

I enjoyed and valued Mann's writing style and the pace of the narrative. Each chapter starts with the name of one of our characters, a year, and a location. It's important to pay attention to these chapter headings because the story moves back and forth through time. Mann handles this time shifting very well and instead of it becoming a distraction, it lends drama and value to the story.

I highly recommend this book, and perhaps more to men. I admit, being a man made this reading a challenge, but a very rewarding one.

A final note: I featured Backshadow on my website, The Back Road Café. However, Julie Mann did not ask me to write a review nor did she give me a copy of her book. I bought my own copy and offer this review because it is a good book.

Ruby Singh says

Diversity's a big buzzword these days, and this novel definitely has it. Diversity in backgrounds, in culture, even in sexuality. It's not an easy story to read by any means, but it does focus on some real issues that don't often get addressed in fiction. I liked that it was based on what's happening now in the world and I liked that the characters made things that are often only mentioned in the news more human and relatable.

Aris Stella says

This is a work of fiction that is pinned in fact. It tackles timely and tough issues facing women on a global scale. Fast-paced and informative, this is storytelling that is sensitive and poignant.

Natasha says

Backshadow revolves around the lives of 3 women from different parts of the world, each from very different backgrounds and with their own stories: Gregory from America, Aneeta from India and Kameko from Japan. These women do not have anything in common other than the fact that each of them has a traumatizing past which has shaped who they are today....

Aneeta, a young teenage girl is raped by her uncle, and for the longest time lives with this secret in shame and pain. When she finally decides to speak out, she is not pitied, but instead married off to a man in America.

Kameko follows the last wishes of her dead mother, and looks to get married and be the perfect traditional Japanese wife. She struggles to balance the cultural upbringing instilled in her after she follows her husband to America, but she feels as though she is losing her identity and purpose.

Gregory had to grow up in a household with a physically abusive father, and things get so out of hand that one day she has to step in and physically stop her father from seriously hurting her mother. This seems like the final push and things are never the same for her after this traumatic incident.

Eventually, Gregory, Aneeta and Kameko end up enrolling in the same English class in San Francisco, and form unexpected yet seemingly therapeutic friendships. This book really grasps the attention of the reader by flashing back and forth into different time periods of each character's life, building up character development and attachment. The intimate descriptions of past experiences help us understand the way culture and society have influenced and shaped the paths these women choose. Backshadow is really an eye-opening book on the various abusive issues that many women face, and the story really allows the reader to understand and feel the emotional backlash that it causes to the victims.

Rovert Sage says

Writing is actually an accepted form of emotional therapy, so it makes sense that the main characters in this story would be using writing class as a way of dealing with the pain of the past. Told by way of a three-part narrative, Backshadow explores in flashback what has brought each woman to that point. Though where they are coming from is, at times, dark and sad, the one thing that's true for all three is that they never give up on the possibility of finding something brighter, something better. This is the story of how they get to that better place.

Jatinder Kaur says

Backshadow is a gritty yet engaging page-turner with a cast of characters you'll find yourself cheering for. A soul-satisfying read.

Bella Baines says

This is a great Book Club candidate for engaging in a discussion about issues that women are facing in the world today. I will be recommending it to mine. The author even finishes the story with facts that back up the various storylines. A good read for raising awareness.
