



Ameera, Unveiled

Kathleen Varn

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At the age of forty-eight, happily remarried and retired from her legal assistant gerbil wheel, Kat decides to break out of her shell and try her hand at belly dancing. What begins as a hobby leads her to filling a coveted spot in Palmetto Oasis Middle Eastern Dance Troupe. With less than eight weeks to prepare, Kat's thrown into a world of performing she is terrified to face, all leading to a week of giving lessons and performing in Jamaica. Traveling with eight glittery strangers, she forges deep bonds under outrageous circumstances at what they'd soon all discover was a clothing-optional resort. Struggling with paralyzing stage fright and searching for the deeper root of her fears, Kat feverishly seeks a way to release Ameera, her inner dance queen. By the end of the week, the audience is mesmerized by the powerful presence and synchronicity of women joined at the hip by scarves and some glitter. Kat soon knows, with the help of eight sisters in dance, that she is finally part of a tribe, discovering an oasis to refresh her thirst to be part of a circle of women.

Ameera, Unveiled Details

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From Reader Review Ameera, Unveiled for online ebook

Angel **Book Junkie** says

If I would have known I would be reading a coming of age diary I am not sure I would have read the book.

At No Time I did not feel that this was a story and at no time did the narrative drag me in and make me want to read this. I also did not understand how someone who could not dance, had never danced, and it was pretty annoying that all of a sudden in six weeks you are ready to perform. I thought the book was too rushed and to much for not enough of a story. I didn't like the character and really felt that it was a pretty annoying read.

Deb Mangolt says

Ameera Unveiled is not just a great story but it's an inspiration to all of us to overcome our own fears and childhood baggage. If you can't relate to Ameera, then you can relate to one of the other amazing women that Ms. Varn writes about. It will make you want to get out there and try something new. I love that Ms. Varn's demonstrates how precious girlfriend time is and the importance of having friends in your life. Well done, Kat!

JG says

3.5 stars

I really liked reading Ameera, Unveiled. This was a book that speaks to the inner child in every woman who dared to dream of being a ballerina but was discouraged either by well meaning people or by fate. Kat Varn decides to take up belly dancing. She has always been interested in dance particularly ballet. She never thought that pursuing a childhood dream would yield so much more in terms of self-discovery, self-confidence and most especially the bonds she forged with the women she eventually calls her tribe. A well written novel that would make you want to have a tribe of your own.

The ARC for this novel was provided by the publisher and NetGalley in return for an honest review

Brandy says

I appreciated the perspective of this book. This is Kat Varn's first book and it feels like part memoir and part fiction, but where ever the truth falls the story was a whole bunch of fun. I received a copy of Ameera Unveiled from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review, and as such, the opinions that follow are my own and uninfluenced by publisher or author. I've always been intrigued by bellydance and have secretly wish to learn. Perhaps that is what initially drew me in, the beautiful cover art. Reading this book was like reading a coming of age story for the middle aged. As an empty nest is looming Kat finds the courage to re-discover herself through dance. I found many of the sentiments relatable and inspiring. It takes courage to

look at your life and think about what you really want, and that is especially hard (in my opinion) for mothers. After giving so much of herself to her family and her career, Kat takes a bold step toward doing something that she enjoys regardless of her own insecurities. Reading about her journey with dance is motivational and funny all at once. All of her characters are very real and she has done a great job exploring the bonds that women share and the healing powers of friendship.

Julie says

This book was given to me by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Kat decided she wanted to do something new after retirement and decided to try belly dancing. By the description given of the book I expected a personal growth story. It almost felt as if it was one of that aims the author was going for, but she didn't quite get there.

The conflict of the story was Kat's stage fright. She talked about it to excess. At one point I was wondering if she was that stressed about dancing and performing why she didn't just quit. Kat started belly dancing as a hobby. Something she wanted to do for herself. Then she became unhinged at the idea of performing in front of people.

Kat's teacher was Sybil. Throughout the book she would finish teaching her class and then hurry off to some nameless place. It felt like her lines in a play were no longer on the page and she needed to get off the stage as quickly as possible. I wondered why and it was never answered.

The author kept hinting at back story, but then wouldn't complete it. For every five hints at background information she would give us one story. She kept describing things with vague words and it felt like she could see the things she was describing so well she would use vague words that left the picture incomplete. One example was the description of a stage. It was described as unusual, I don't know what made it unusual, was it made out of marble, or was it amoeba shaped, maybe there were spikes on the outer edge. I have no idea what made it unusual.

I wondered what Kat's family thought about her dancing. They were mentioned and said to be supportive, but she did not practice in front of them and they only went to one of her performances. For the most part we didn't actually talk to them about it and I wondered.

The other dancers were just names until near the end of the book. There was very little background information given. I had no feelings about them positive or negative. After awhile I stopped trying to keep them straight.

Halfway through there was a sudden location change. The characters went to a place where the people they encountered were behaving differently than what is considered the social norm, there were swingers, cross dressers, roll playing, etc. It felt like she was trying to be shocking and the more she went on about it the more her delivery fell short.

By the end of the story I did enjoy the friendships which had formed between Kat and the other characters.

Terri Leidich says

Sometimes I just want to curl up with a good "chic flick in a book," and Ameera Unveiled was just that for me. The main character is trying to deal with her desire to/fear of dance along with trying to recover from a prior relationship that was subtly abusive, which can be the worst kind. In this quest, she signs up for a belly dancing class to help her with her dance desires/phobia. Unbeknownst to her, this simple act of signing up for a class opens up a brand new world of friendships, experiences, lessons, and opportunities to grow far beyond what she could have imagined. Whether we're into dance or not, women in general can gain great insights into their own lives from this delightful story.

Hilary says

3.5 stars

I enjoyed Kat/Ameera's journey, but felt the dance instruction progressed very quickly for older beginners taking one hourly class a week (veil work after 2 classes, for example). Readers without any experience of bellydancing or Middle Eastern culture may find themselves confused by the terms tossed around without explanation, such as zaghareets, but may also enjoy the feeling of solidarity and personal growth that Kat and the others experienced.

Disclaimer: I received a free copy from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Ramya (Idea Smith) says

This is supposed to be a story about a middle aged woman embracing her empowerment via belly-dancing. I expected it to have a lot of dance narratives. I also imagined that since it is a coming-of-age story (of a sort), it would have a number of ups and downs.

Instead, Ameera Unveiled runs on like a personal fantasy, with very little colour or detail to make it interesting. The actual dance sequences are skipped over with a line or two like 'In less than an hour, she slipped away'. I went all the way to page 202 in a 322-page book without one single dance action being described. It made me wonder whether the author did any research at all on belly dancing or whether she just cleverly spun words around the idea because she thought it would get more interest.

The narrative is extremely linear and the characters, cardboard. Two-thirds into the book, I still didn't know the different names (only that they were all part of the 'troupe' and were excited to be in it). Instead, the story is filled with page after page of Kat's own whining and self-glorification (Look how wonderful I am! I'm so shy, I've suffered so much but I'm doing this cool thing!). You already know with every situation that she's going to enter it with trepidation and come out smelling on top, something that everyone else can see but mysteriously she never can.

I suffered Kat's lousy tale all the way till 2/3rds the way before giving up. I don't expect the story or the characters to change much by this point. And if they do, then it's too little, too late. You've lost your reader already.

I got this book from NetGalley.

Chana says

I have a personal tie to the story as Kat/Ameera is my mother. That being said, and I've said this to her, I had a hard time having patience with the character. I found myself wanting to say, "this is supposed to be fun! Quit your stressing and whining!" The story brought me to a new perspective of appreciating other people's journeys and having patience and meeting people at the place they are. Plus, with this story being the "based on actual events" type, it meant that much more to me to relive Kat's experiences and gain a whole new perspective of her journey that I couldn't have possibly had while it was happening. While I wasn't able to personally connect to the female empowerment part, I did learn patience! :-)

Sorcha says

Received from Netgalley.com in exchange for a review

This is a semi autobiographical story (the main character being called Kat Varn) about a middle aged woman on her second marriage, retired, and looking for something new to do. She signs up for a belly dancing class, which makes her confront her crippling self doubt. This started in childhood, when her mother and ballet teacher were overheard agreeing not to let her keep coming to class, followed by years with a controlling first husband who constantly put her down to control her.

She forces herself to keep going to class, even though she believes the other women seem to be so more talented than her. Details of the classes are kept to a minimum, and the secondary characters - from the new husband, to the daughters and teachers - are one dimensional and are barely fleshed out. She auditions for and is accepted by a dance troupe, whose first trip away is to Jamaica, to a resort called Hedonism II, which is a swingers and nudist resort where it seems that anything goes. It seems that Kat is not quite a "prude" (she doesn't strip off, but then she doesn't run away screaming either) and is more concerned with the fact there are no events planned for the week that the troupe are in Jamaica. The Ladies in the troupe become less one dimensional once they arrive in Jamaica, where there are daily bonding sessions, usually over alcohol, where everyone gets to share why they have found themselves in a belly dancing troupe in Jamaica. The story culminates in an evening event where the ladies get to show off their skills.

The book did drag for me quite a lot, and it took effort to pull me back in in order to finish it. In Summary: I can see where some people may take inspiration from the story about confronting low self esteem and stage fright but it took some effort on my part to finish.
