



Together Tea

Marjan Kamali

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In *Together Tea*, Marjan Kamali's delightful and heartwarming debut novel, Darya has discovered the perfect gift for her daughter's twenty-fifth birthday: an ideal husband. Mina, however, is fed up with her mother's years of endless matchmaking and the spreadsheets grading available Iranian-American bachelors. Having spent her childhood in Tehran and the rest of her life in New York City, Mina has experienced cultural clashes firsthand, but she's learning that the greatest clashes sometimes happen at home.

After a last ill-fated attempt at matchmaking, mother and daughter embark on a return journey to Iran. Immersed once again in Persian culture, the two women gradually begin to understand each other. But when Mina falls for a young man who never appeared on her mother's matchmaking radar, will Mina and Darya's new-found appreciation for each other survive?

Together Tea is a moving and joyous debut novel about family, love, and finding the place you truly belong.

Together Tea Details

Date : Published May 21st 2013 by Ecco (first published 2013)

ISBN :

Author : Marjan Kamali

Format : Kindle Edition 338 pages

Genre : Fiction, Cultural, Iran, Historical, Historical Fiction, Contemporary

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Shoshanah says

Going into this book I was expected a cute chick lit with a matchmaking mother, and a daughter wanting to find love on her own. That's the type of book I enjoy, and would have been perfect for the beach (which is where I was when reading). Except, I was pleasantly surprised and am happy to say this was so much more than that.

The first part of the novel takes place in 1996 when Darya and her 20-something daughter, Mina, both reach the decision that the need to go back to Iran in order to move forward in their lives. The second section, goes back in time to 1978, the dawn of the Iranian revolution, how it impacted Darya, Mina, and their family and what it was like escaping to America. The final third detailed their trip back to Iran.

I don't think I've ever read anything that takes place in Iran, and was fascinated by all the information here. While I do have some idea of the revolution and what happened, I learned far more from this "chick lit" than anything else in my life so far.

In addition, while I loved the history and culture, Mina's story is what really spoke to me. So much of this book is Mina's journey finding herself and discovering what she wants with her life. (Darya had a similar path, but given the age difference it was harder for me to identify with her.) Part of me wants to classify this as new adult, as in the becoming an adult, but not quite sure how that's supposed to happen (similar to my reaction to Bond Girl), except with out the ridiculously naive girl that seems to be standard in the NA genre.

The novel end came close to bringing me to tears, and probably would have if I wasn't reading it in an elevator full of 20 people. But it was so good, I couldn't put it down. I really, truly loved my experience with this book, and feel like this is one I need to start loaning out so everyone I know can discover it.

Disclosure: I was provided this book through TLC Book Tours. All opinions expressed are my own.

Melissa says

This was an easy and quick read that caught me by surprise and with a few tears also. This is the story of an Iranian family that immigrated to America in order for their children to have freedom and to live without fear. I loved Mina (the daughter), Darya (the mom), and Parviz (the dad). I found myself easily sucked into turning the pages and the world around me disappeared as I read to find out what was going to happen next. My heart was touched both when the family left Iran and when Mina and Darya returned. I could not imagine leaving my close family for so long with no knowledge of when we would meet again. The author did a great job of introducing Iranian culture and showing the beauty and color of Iran.

Elisa Waingort says

Loved it! I have good Iranian friends and based on conversations with them, the historical aspect of this novel rang true to me.

The conflicts experienced by immigrants are personally familiar to me, as well.
I could easily connect to Mina, the main character.
Highly recommended

Terri says

How can I possibly review, let alone rate, Marjan's lovely first novel? I knew it would be good, and yet it snuck up on me. It started well, but somewhere around 2/3 of the way through it really picked up for me (as I suppose a lot of the best novels do!). The novel gives us an intimate view of a culture with which some readers may not be familiar while simultaneously speaking universal truths. It's a delight.

Eileen says

A perfect novel. The characters are so well drawn yet the writing is very tight; not a word wasted. Under the guise of a light, almost romantic comedy, this book examines some serious themes: the plight of the immigrant (in this case Iranian-Americans but really all immigrants anywhere) and the lives of modern Iranians. It has all the elements of a classic novel including the ending (which I of course won't reveal here). Highly recommend to all.

Sejla says

What a wonderful book!! It made me laugh, it made me cry(more than once)it made me think. I could connect to Mina's character and also just the story and struggles of being an immigrant itself I could relate to, which is why it was such an emotional read for me. I feel that unless you have been through a similar situation in life, you cannot understand it. I enjoyed the different characters and would highly recommend this book! I also learned a lot of things I did not know about the Iranian culture. Overall, do yourself a favor and read this little gem!

Eileen says

I loved this book, which focuses on the lives of Mina and her mom Darya, immigrants from Iran. The book begins with Darya setting up Mina with a potential husband, but the story becomes much more than that as they talk about their experiences in Iran when the Iraq/Iran war broke out, and their experiences in America when they first arrived. I love the books exploration of immigrants not feeling part of one culture or the other, where they feel like they are part of the hyphen between the two worlds. It resonated with me, although I am first generation born Taiwanese. To me, this book is ultimately a story about love, family, culture, identity, and finding your place in this world.

lanius_minor says

Kdyby někomu vrtalo hlavou, proč knížce, která od jiných tená?? dostává výrazně víc hvězdiček, já dávám jen dvě, nabízím jednoduché vysvětlení: příběh nenaplnil má očekávání a styl vyprávění mi nesedl. Já zkrátka nerada, když na mě text působí jako úkol odevzdaný na kurzu tvůrčího psaní. Bohem tení se mi příliš často vybavovala Persepolis a zejména nedávno tený Dm u měšity a ve srovnání s nimi až s nápadníkem napadal na jednu nohu. Tolik subjektivní hodnocení. Objektivně se kniha může jiným tená??m líbit mnohem víc - a průměrné hodnocení bezmála čtyřmi hvězdičkami ukazuje, že se opravdu líbí.

Rokia says

An adorable and warm story. I related to a lot of cultural aspects here and also loved that the book was enriched with history about Iran.

Kanchana Bandara-Coore says

"She [Mina] knew how to swing her legs on that hyphen that defined and denied who she was: Iranian-American. Neither the first word nor the second really belonged to her. Her place was on the hyphen, and on the hyphen she would stay, carrying memories of the one place from which she had come and the other place in which she must succeed."

As a child immigrant myself, these words resonated deeply with me, as I too know the feeling of living on the hyphen, and especially one like Mina's which separates two very different cultures. On the surface, this is a story about a mother and daughter, and finding love. I was drawn to the title because tea with my daughters is a ritual I too engage in, enjoy and look forward to. As I got into the story and the many themes and perspectives it explored, I found myself identifying with the characters' emotions (both from my perspective as a mother of a daughter, and as a daughter myself), and also having many "I never thought of it that way, but that is so true" moments.

I was deeply moved, but beyond that, I gained a deeper insight into how my mother must have felt leaving the safety and security of extended family and familiar customs, and accompany her husband to provide a better life for her children. I better appreciated how we can make wrong assumptions about people and why they do what they do when we do not stop to imagine what things might be like from their perspective. Mina, the daughter, is the character who lives on the hyphen. She is taunted at school as a youngster by Americans who call her a terrorist because she is Iranian. When she returns to Iran, her grandfather accuses her and her mother of betraying her people and her country and running to America which supported Iraq in a war which killed Iranians.

She is transported to memories of the happiest times of her childhood with doting grandparents by the sights and scents of Iran when she returns as an adult. At the same time, she misses the freedom of walking with the sun on her hair in public, which is possible for her in America but not in Iran. She wishes she could have both, yet feels she has to renounce one in order to have the other....and so she lives on the hyphen...caught in between.

There was another reason this book moved me so much. It was the first book I read on returning home after settling my older daughter into college in another country. I was simultaneously excited about all the incredible growth experiences that awaited my daughter's new stage in life, and struggling to accept life without my daughter at arm's reach. I gained some much appreciated insight into coming to terms with my own current relationship transition in these words from the final chapters of the novel:

"As she watched Mina go up the steps, Darya suddenly felt the impulse to rush up, grab her, and whisper ,

'Mina Joon, you don't have to get married...Just continue to be my little girl, always'

But instead she heard her own voice tell Mina to hurry up and get ready because the guests would be arriving soon."

Later as Darya sees Mina sitting on her bed dressed in her wedding dress..." For a fleeting second, Darya had an image of having tea with her married daughter. She realised then that it wasn't the end. She and Mina would still have each other. When Mina got back from her honeymoon, Darya and Mina could go out for 'together tea' and talk about Mina's work plans, and where to buy the best moisturizer. It was a huge relief to realise that her daughter would still be hers"

The mark of a really good book for me is one that leaves me feeling changed from the person I was before I read the book. "Together Tea" did that for me.

Linda says

Full disclosure: Marjan Kamali is a writing friend. I loved this book from page one to the end because the characters were so engaging - and real. Some might call this a light summer read, but I believe it's a witty, humorous book with incredible poignancy and depth.

Marjan, who is an Iranian American, gives readers a sense of what it was like during the Iranian revolution in the 1970s. She also takes us into the modern lives of Iranians both in Iran and in America.

It's a story about a mother-daughter relationship, but it's also as much a story about immigrants in America. I highly recommend this book, not just because the author is a dear friend. It is an absolutely dear book.

Audrey says

A well done story about emigration and immigration as well as the loss of family bonds. What was especially well done was Mina's sense of displacement, despite assimilating in the US at a young age, and feeling like she didn't belong either in the US or in Iran. And, I loved the reunion scene that Mina and her mother had with her relatives when they went back to visit them. I did feel a lot of stress and tension during all the airport scenes.

Booktart says

A great story. The history of Iran before, during, and post Revolution (in this book, immediately after and then years later, in 1996) is fascinating. As the author points out throughout the book, the media here often paints a one-sided picture of Iran due to its government and in doing so, ignores the people actually living there, many of whom have progressive beliefs but are completely silenced by the government. I was glad to get some insight into what daily life is like for Iranian citizens. Kamali also does an excellent job of portraying the mixed emotions of the immigrant experience. The love story aspect of the book was nice but felt a bit cliché at times, as did some of the writing about life, marriage, etc. (hence the three stars). Overall though, I did enjoy this novel!

Linda Blake says

The thing I liked most about this book was learning about Iranian culture and how it humanized the Iranian people. The romance plot line was weak. The description of food was almost obsessive.

Marcy says

What a wonderful story! It begins in America, where Darya, a caring mom, tells her 25 year old daughter, Mina, that she found a wonderful man she wanted her to meet. He was one out of dozens that Mina had to meet with her mom and dad present...

Darya grew up in Iran, where her own mother arranged her marriage to Parviz, a kind, generous man, a doctor. Darya and Parviz married and had three children, two boys and Mina. Life was good for the family until Sadaam started bombing Iran, and war was upon them. Revolutionary guards began making demands upon the people of Iran: no dancing, no western clothes, women must cover their heads and their bodies, etc. When one of Sadaam's bombs killed Darya's mother on her way to buy a special pomegranate for her granddaughter, Parviz arranged for his family to move to America. Mina lived a life between Iran and America. Her dad had to work making pizzas until he could pass all of his tests to become a doctor once again. Her mom worked in a dry cleaner, sewing for the New York populace until Parviz could support the family once again...

Mina was going to business school, instead of art school, which was her parents' wishes. When Mina decides to quit business school and take a vacation in Iran to find herself, her mom decides to join Mina to rejoin their family. It is in Iran, among family and friends, that mother and daughter begin to understand each other. It is also where Mina finds the love of her life, totally unexpectedly.

This story has humor and sadness interwoven among the pages. I will repeat, this is a wonderful story!
