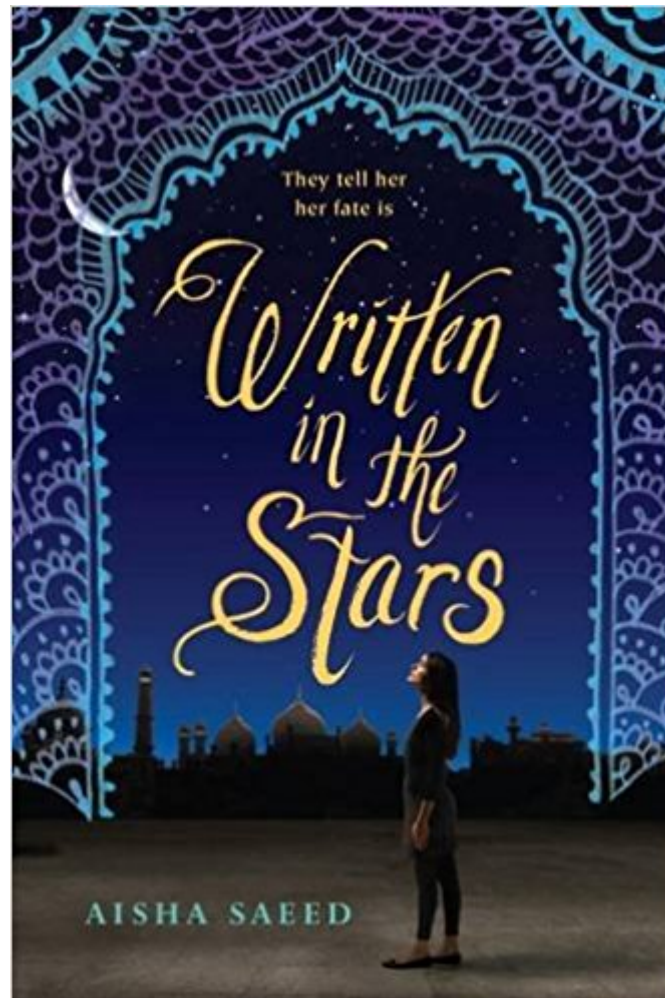




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Written In The Stars



Synopsis

A heart-wrenching tale of forbidden love! A wonderfully complex love story unlike any you've read before. Saeed has given a novel that is both entertaining and important. Matt de la Peña, New York Times bestselling author. Naila's conservative immigrant parents have always said the same thing: She may choose what to study, how to wear her hair, and what to be when she grows up but they will choose her husband. Following their cultural tradition, they will plan an arranged marriage for her. And until then, dating—even friendship with a boy—is forbidden. When Naila breaks their rule by falling in love with Saif, her parents are livid. Convinced she has forgotten who she truly is, they travel to Pakistan to visit relatives and explore their roots. But Naila's vacation turns into a nightmare when she learns that plans have changed—her parents have found her a husband and they want her to marry him, now! Despite her greatest efforts, Naila is aghast to find herself cut off from everything and everyone she once knew. Her only hope of escape is Saif. If he can find her before it's too late.

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Family Issues > Dating & Sex

Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up Naila is a Pakistani American high school senior. As the story opens, her greatest trouble is the risk of going to the prom with her high school sweetheart against the wishes of her protective and conservative parents. She does anyway, her parents find out, and their reaction is swift and extreme: the family departs immediately for Pakistan and negotiates an arranged marriage

for Naila. Her impassioned struggle against the constraints of an arranged marriage is contrived in places, but it is a compelling story nonetheless. This is a cross-cultural eye opener; since Naila had never left the US until she was 18, her first-person account resonates in its explanations of the rituals, especially how they would look and feel from an American point of view. Yet the setting is pure Pakistani, with culturally rich descriptions of Naila's extended family, their cuisine, and strongly held beliefs. The prose is simple and straightforward. Although the book's hallmark is not text complexity, the spare prose is more evocative than stilted: Saeed shows rather than tells, allowing readers to imagine how Naila must feel. There is some violence and sex, both appropriate to the context and the age of the protagonist. A good choice for libraries looking to diversify their shelves.

—Amy Thurow, New Glarus School District, WI --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Praise for *Written in the Stars*

“Readers will be drawn into Naila’s trials and tribulations as she navigates the reality of her new life in Pakistan and explores what inner resources she needs to change her fate. . . . Sheds light on the difficult phenomenon of forced marriage, still prevalent in many cultures around the world and often shrouded in silence.”

—Kirkus Reviews

“Movingly conveys the intense cultural pressure that motivates Naila’s parents and the heartbreaking betrayal Naila feels as she is deprived of her rights, cut off from the outside world, and threatened with shame and death. Saeed includes resources for those who, like Saif’s family, wish to help real-life Nailas, in this wrenching but hopeful story.”

—Publishers Weekly

“Compelling. . . . This is a cross-cultural eye opener. . . . Resonates in its explanations of the rituals, especially how they would look and feel from an American point of view. Yet the setting is pure Pakistani, with culturally rich descriptions of Naila’s extended family, their cuisine, and strongly held beliefs. . . . Evocative.”

—School Library Journal

“Naila’s harrowing story is compellingly told. . . . Stirring, haunting, and ultimately hopeful.”

—Booklist

“Saeed’s portrayal of a bicultural young woman is spot on in terms of both Naila’s expectations of eventual autonomy and her confusion over what is happening to her; she can’t imagine that her life is completely out of her own control. . . . An author’s note explains that while her own ‘semiarranged’ marriage was a success, she wrote the book to draw attention to the ‘silent epidemic’ of forced marriage; through Naila’s ordeal, readers will certainly have their eyes opened to how someone can be forced to marry against her will.”

—The

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books author endorsements – "This suspenseful story about a young woman trapped in a marriage she doesn't want will make your heart ache. I couldn't put it down." – Suzanne Fisher Staples, author of Newbery Honor winner *Shabanu* – "In this beautiful debut novel, Saeed offers a look inside the heartbreaking realities of a young woman caught between her American upbringing and her parents' traditional views on love and marriage. This is a page-turner about love, culture, family and the perilous journey into womanhood worldwide. I couldn't put it down." – Meg Medina, author of *Pura Belpré* © Author Award winner Yaqui Delgado *Wants to Kick Your Ass* – "Written in the Stars is a wonderfully complex love story unlike any you've read before. Saeed has given a novel that is both entertaining and important." – Matt de la Peña, author of *Pura Belpré* © Author Honor winner *The Living*

**For more reviews, follow me at <https://www.goodreads.com/xorubituesdays> Written in the Stars is a beautiful eye opening novel for anyone who is ignorant in the subject of arranged marriages. I had heard of them before and knew the basics of what it was, but as a Hispanic it is not something I ever felt the need to really learn about. My favorite thing about reading has always been that it gives you the ability to see life through the eyes of someone who isn't you. Through this story, I was able to see life through the eyes of a scared 17 year old Pakistani-American girl facing a forced marriage. "My mother always says when you fight destiny, destiny fights back. Some things, they're just written in the stars. You can try, but you can never escape what's meant to be." -Naila Although Naila's parents are immigrants from Pakistan, she has only ever known life in Florida, USA. Living far away from their birth country has never stopped them from continuing to practice the same beliefs, religion, and culture. From the age of ten, Naila has been told that she can choose her career, her clothing, and the length of her hair, but who she will marry is not her decision to make. Her future husband will be chosen by her parents. For a year now, Naila has been hiding her relationship with Saif who's family is also Pakistani. In this culture, one of the most important things is not doing anything to bring shame to your family's reputation. Unfortunately, Saif's family is looked down upon by the rest of the community and is therefore not someone her family would even consider. When Naila's parents find out of their relationship, they are determined that visiting their roots will change the way she feels. Naila agrees to make the trip to Pakistan under the impression that they are there to visit family for the summer. What Naila doesn't know is that her parents are really trying to set up her arranged marriage! Now, she is in a completely different country that is run

by a different set of rules. She knows what she wants is back in America, but leaving Pakistan seems impossible when her own family has turned on her."I know I will forget many details of this moment, but I will never forget the slap across my face. Or my chacha storming inside, my hands upon the cold concrete floor, the metallic taste of blood in my mouth..." -NailaI don't think I've ever read a book that made me feel so helpless and angry! What upsets me the most is that Naila is such a good daughter. She is graduating salutatorian and has earned a scholarship into med school. Even with everything that is thrown at her, she doesn't want to bring dishonor and shame to her parents. I was obviously not raised in her culture, but a hard working and respectful 17 year old is just a rare gem these days and it made me angry that it wasn't enough for her parents. They cause her so much heartache and scars that will run deep psychologically."Maybe, I think, if I don't look up, if I simply look down and never look up again for the rest of my life, the feelings buried within will never rise to the surface." -NailaAisha Saeed, the author, made the chapters very short and it allowed the novel to feel fast paced without being rushed or important details being overlooked. I quickly fell in love with her writing style and ability to make a story flow. She leaves an author's note explaining how although Naila's story is fictional, arranged marriages are very real. Pakistan is only one country out of the many, including the United States, where forced marriages happen."It is my hope that this novel will provide a voice for so many girls who see themselves in Naila and who shouldn't have to suffer in silence." -Aisha SaeedI really enjoyed getting to see the world through the eyes of a different culture! There were words used that I was not familiar with, such as kamiz and salwar, but I never felt lost. Using context clues made it easy to put things together. However, the author includes a glossary in case you need any help!**For more reviews, follow me at <https://www.goodreads.com/xorubituesdays>

Eye-opening and disturbing! This story took me into a world I'd never visited before and left me shaken. I was rooting for the main character every step of the way, and felt her heartbreak as dream after dream was crushed. I came out of it knowing more about arranged marriages (not difficult, since I knew next to nothing to begin with!) and was fascinated and disturbed by what I read.

I love reading about different cultures including a woman's life in Pakistan but never had I read a book more inspiring and tear jerking until this story. I found myself so absorbed into this book, unable to put down, and totally emotionally unstable. I recommend this book to everyone who wants a fast and exceptional read. Just wow! There are no words really more that convey truly my love for this book!

This novel is just breathtaking - the twists and turns are jaw-dropping, heart-clenching, and will keep you flipping pages until you reach the very last one. Even when you see what's happening, even once you know what direction the story is about to take, it is near-impossible to turn away. I put this book down only once, and with great impatience, to attend to the rest of my life, but really, this is a one-sitting kind of read. Not only that, but the cultural awareness it presents - that alone is worth its weight in gold. This is an eye-opener. Pick it up and I promise, when you put it down again you will be changed, and you won't regret a thing.

Saeed's writing here is beautiful and tense. This left me feeling a little raw, but in such a good way. It was a difficult read at times because I felt so hard for Naila.

This is a very interesting book for me. I was born and brought up in a Christian American household in rural Vermont. The idea that forced marriage can happen to someone brought up in this country is very foreign to me. It must have been very scary to go to another country, be betrayed by your parents and put in a situation where you are unable to leave and find your life in danger should you try. This is an excellent book and I highly recommend it.

What a book by Aisha Saeed! She portrays the troubles of an American-Pakistani protagonist Naila with such warm sympathy and inside-the-skin details that it makes the reader shudder with pain and compassion. It was also a great joy for me to read a novel that portrayed a culture I can relate to. Coming from India, I know the situation Naila faces are the reality of many women's lives. Brilliant book.

Amazing! This is a one-sitting read that I couldn't put down. Saeed captures the hope and the hopelessness and the conflict between generations so well. It's like a YA A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS.

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