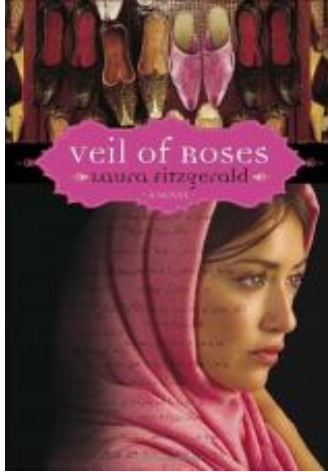


Veil of Roses

by Laura Fitzgerald



About the Book

This compelling debut follows one spirited young woman from the confines of Iran to the intoxicating freedom of America?where she discovers not only an enticing new country but the roots of her own independence....

Tamila Soroush wanted it all. But in the Islamic Republic of Iran, dreams are a dangerous thing for a girl. Knowing they can never come true, Tami abandons them...Until her twenty-fifth birthday, when her parents give her a one-way ticket to America, hoping she will ?go and wake up her luck.? If they have their way, Tami will never return to Iran...which means she has three months to find a husband in America. Three months before she?s sent back for good.

From her first Victoria?s Secret bra to her first ride on a motor scooter to her first country line-dance, Tami drinks in the freedom of an American girl. Inspired to pursue her passion for photography, she even captures her adventures on film. But looming over her is the fact that she must find an Iranian-born husband before her visa expires. To complicate matters, her friendship with Ike, a young American man, has grown stronger. And it is becoming harder for Tami to ignore the forbidden feelings she has for him.

It?s in her English as a second language classes that Tami finds a support system. With the encouragement of headstrong Eva, loyal Nadia, and Agata and Josef, who are carving out a love story of their own, perhaps Tami can keep dreaming?and find a way to stay in America.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the storytelling approach used in **Veil of Roses**. Did you find Tami?s first person narrative effective or limiting in any way?
2. Compare and contrast the two Soroush sisters, Tami and Maryam. How do their outlooks on marriage differ? Do you

think Tami believes Maryam takes advantage of all of the liberties that are available to her now that she is settled in America?

3. Discuss the significance and the meaning of the veil within the novel. At one point in the story, Tami explains, "My bedroom has always been my refuge". It is the only place I did not have to wear some sort of veil, some sort of mask. It has only been alone at night that I get any sense of who I am, of who I might become. It is alone at night that I have found my greatest peace." (page 109) How does this passage represent so much of Tami's Iranian life?

4. Tami becomes close friends with the somewhat eccentric people in her English as a second language class. From all over the world, these people have had different experiences in America. Besides a better understanding of English, what does Tami learn from these daily classes and the people in them? What, in turn, is she able to teach her peers?

5. Discuss Tami's relationship with Eva. What is the root of the frustration that surfaces between them at times. Is Eva being naïve when she makes suggestions about how Iranian women should act in certain circumstances? Is Tami overly defensive in these situations? Why or why not?

6. Besides the people in her class, Tami also makes a connection with one of her neighbors, Rose McClellan. Though Rose is of a considerable age, she is not married and never has been. As Tami stares at the sign hanging above Rose's door, which reads "*La Case de Rosa*", she thinks, "I like Rose. Unmarried Rose. I wonder if she lives in that big house all alone. I wonder what she does all day by herself. Does she play loud music? Paint her toenails while watching television? Does she sleep in the middle of the bed?" How is Rose's lifestyle as a single and happy woman somewhat shocking and bewildering to Tami? What impact does Rose's lifestyle have on Tami's mode of thinking?

7. While in Tucson, Tami is able to pursue her passion for photography. She sets about capturing on film "everyday acts of rebellion" that she sees women committing all around her. What are some examples of these acts of rebellion and why are they so significant to her?

8. In the United States, it is a sound assumption that love is a prerequisite to marriage. However in order to stay in America, Tami may have to forfeit this privilege and concede to an arranged agreement. Considering Nadia's situation, do you think giving up this choice is worth gaining the other potential freedoms?

9. Maryam's husband, Ardishir, seems to be the voice of reason throughout the novel. Why and in what ways is his character's role essential to the story?

10. The two Persian men that present themselves as possible husbands for Tami, Haroun and Masoud, prove to ultimately be impossible matches. What are the downfalls to these two arrangements?

11. How is Tami's actual wedding significant to the underlying themes of the book as a whole? Not only does the ceremony exclude any and all Persian traditions, but she also decides to forgo wearing any type of veil. What do you make of this scene?

12. There is reference to the phrase "The bride has gone to pick some flowers?" during different parts of the book. Discuss what this Persian saying means and how it becomes ingrained in Tami's mind as she begins to truly root her independence.

Author Bio

Laura Fitzgerald lives in Tucson, Arizona with her Iranian-American husband and their two children.

Critical Praise

"In this winning debut, Fitzgerald has crafted the powerful story of one woman's courage to look beyond the life that she has been given --- Veil of Roses is a poignant and uplifting novel full of charm, wit and grace."

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