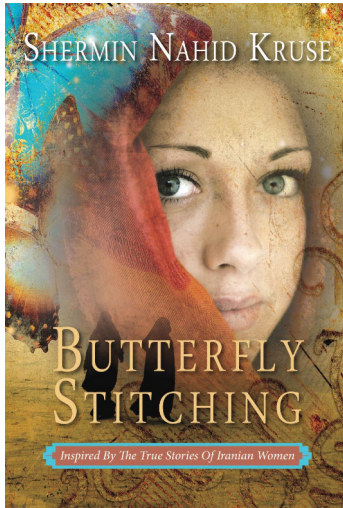


Five stars for BUTTERFLY STITCHING

by Shermin Nahid Kruse



Rating: ★★★★★

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There's been a lot of discussion recently about the need for more diverse characters in the realm of fiction narratives. The recently trended Twitter hashtag #WeNeedDiverseBooks speaks of the call from readers and authors alike for books that experiment and flash new colors. Gender-bending, genre-bending, and mixed media have all surfaced as growing fields of fiction.

Shermin Nahid Kruse's recent May release, *Butterfly Stitching*, certainly answers the call for diversity. The fictional novel – based all too truly on the stories of real Iranian women – tells the tale of a mother and a daughter growing up in highly volatile Persian times. The text itself escapes the bounds of flat narrative; the book's story alternates between being told through traditional third person form and through the “modified screenplay” that is in fact the in-story thesis of one of the protagonists. *Butterfly Stitching* diversifies even further, including Farsi and English poetry as part of the text in addition to making descriptions and discussions of visual part of the overarching plot as well. Kruse's authorial voice is particularly vivid and colorful itself, often straddling the divide between poetic prose and lyrical poetry.

However, Kruse's novel by no means feels like one more arcane discussion of intangible aesthetic philosophy. *Butterfly Stitching* is, ultimately, a story, and a well-told one at that. The characters have depth and evidence real-world motivation. They and their adventures – and misadventures – are very much rooted in the factual, tangible people and experience the author has herself encountered. The voice of the younger protagonist, Sahar, occasionally slips into diction that is obviously sourced in a woman beyond her years, but the tone discrepancy is a minor one for a new author and by no means disrupts the flow of the book for the casual reader.

With all there is to laud in *Butterfly Stitching*, Kruse should be most applauded for her two female main characters, mother Samira and daughter Sahar. In them, Kruse captures the depth and complexity and humanity of the real Iranian woman, whether her youth occurred in the 1960's or early 2000's. From the beginning, Kruse's women are strong. Not the faultless sort of strong. Not the flat sort of strong. The grief-torn, sorrow-weakened, hit-hard-across-the-head-with-reality and yet still just as stubborn sort of strong that is the actual veracity of a female population that is wise and foolish and oppressed and rebellious. What's more, Kruse's women do not blush over their confidence nor apologize for their capability. In *Butterfly Stitching*, Kruse captures the soul of women who have both clung to and ripped off garbs that have at different points hidden and served as a means of self-expression for the women beneath them.

Butterfly Stitching's is an ambitious project, capturing the soul and voice of an entire people. – and Shermin Kruse succeeds, astoundingly well.

To purchase a copy of *Butterfly Stitching* by Shermin Nahid Kruse, visit its Amazon product page:
<http://www.amazon.com/Butterfly-Stitching-Shermin-Nahid-Kruse/dp/0996050205>
