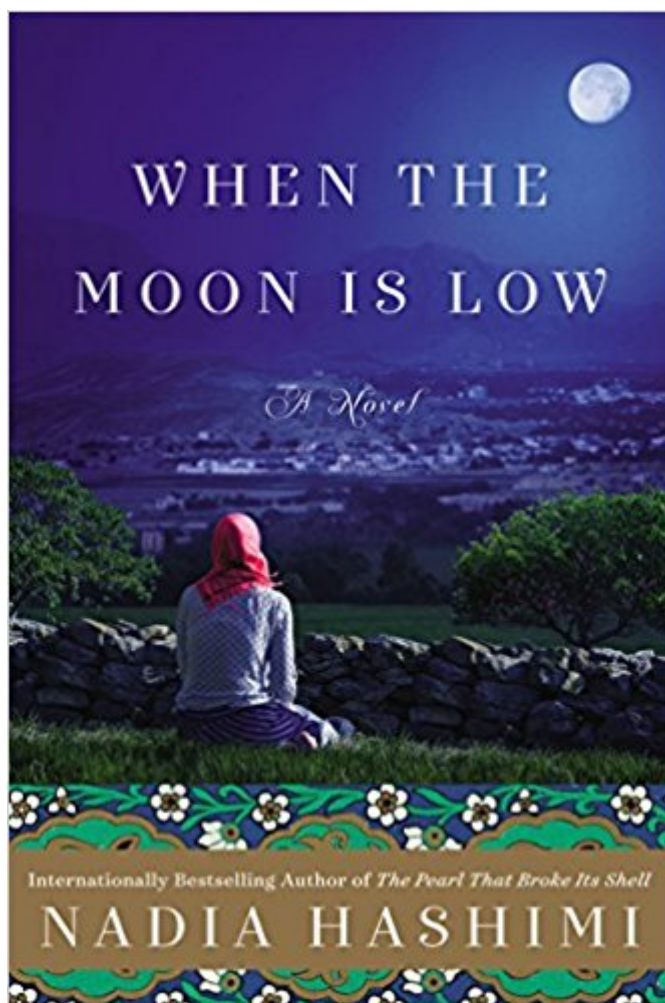


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# When The Moon Is Low: A Novel



## Synopsis

Mahmoud's passion for his wife Fereiba, a schoolteacher, is greater than any love she's ever known. But their happy, middle-class world—a life of education, work, and comfort—implodes when their country is engulfed in war, and the Taliban rises to power. Mahmoud, a civil engineer, becomes a target of the new fundamentalist regime and is murdered. Forced to flee Kabul with her three children, Fereiba has one hope to survive: she must find a way to cross Europe and reach her sister's family in England. With forged papers and help from kind strangers they meet along the way, Fereiba makes a dangerous crossing into Iran under cover of darkness. Exhausted and brokenhearted but undefeated, Fereiba manages to smuggle them as far as Greece. But in a busy market square, their fate takes a frightening turn when her teenage son, Saleem, becomes separated from the rest of the family. Faced with an impossible choice, Fereiba pushes on with her daughter and baby, while Saleem falls into the shadowy underground network of undocumented Afghans who haunt the streets of Europe's capitals. Across the continent Fereiba and Saleem struggle to reunite, and ultimately find a place where they can begin to reconstruct their lives.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 400 pages

Publisher: William Morrow; First Edition edition (July 21, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0062369571

ISBN-13: 978-0062369574

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.2 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 283 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #694,571 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #30 in [Books > Travel > Asia > Afghanistan](#) #1773 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Cultural Heritage](#) #5562 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Women's Fiction > Domestic Life](#)

## Customer Reviews

“Expertly depicting the anxiety and excitement that accompanies a new life, Hashimi's gripping page-turner is perfect for book clubs.” (Library Journal (starred review)) “A must-read saga about borders, barriers, and the resolve of one courageous mother fighting to cross over.” (O, the Oprah Magazine)

By turns astonishing, frightening, and triumphant, *When the Moon Is Low* chronicles one brave Afghan woman's odyssey to save her family. In Kabul, we meet Fereiba, a schoolteacher who puts her troubled childhood behind her when she finds love in an arranged marriage. But Fereiba's comfortable life implodes when the Taliban rises to power and her family becomes a target of the new fundamentalist regime. Forced to flee with her three children, Fereiba has one hope for survival: to seek refuge with her sister's family in London. Traveling with forged papers and depending on the kindness of strangers, Fereiba and the children make a dangerous crossing into Iran under cover of darkness, the start of a harrowing journey that reduces her from a respected wife and mother to a desperate refugee. Eventually they fall into the shadowy underground network of the undocumented who haunt the streets of Europe's cities. And then, in a busy market square in Athens, their fate takes a frightening turn when Fereiba's teenage son, Saleem, becomes separated from the rest of the family. Without his mother, Saleem is forced, abruptly and unforgivingly, to come of age in a world of human trafficking and squalid refugee camps. Heartbroken, Fereiba has no choice but to continue on with only her daughter and baby. Mother and son cross border after perilous border, risking their lives in the hope of finding a place where they can be reunited.

If you enjoy the writing of Khaled Hosseini, I think you will also appreciate both of Nadia Hashimi's novels. I loved *When The Moon Is Low*. It is an emotional journey about love of family, freedom and country. It explores the limits of personal strength and determination as well as the bonds between parent and child. I did not want it to end. My only criticism is one that I am finding in many books lately. SPOILER AHEAD By the end of the book you are hoping for the emotional payoff which does not really come because the conclusion of the story is left to the reader's imagination rather than played out. That said, and questionable title aside, this was a very enjoyable book, one I highly recommend.

Was patiently waiting for the release of this book as her first novel I couldn't put it down. This started out with a bang for me and fizzled out a little about 3/4 of the way through. I did skip through towards the end and finally finished only to be left shaking my head. I would give it 3 1/2 stars and not a complete wast of my time but certainly not a favorite.

This story is simply told, in the voices of Fareiba, and her son Saleem as they leave a troubled

Afghanistan for a better life in London. The story traces Fareiba's difficult life first as a motherless child, and later as a widow with three children compelled to leave her country after her husband is killed. Saleem's voice join in as the family begins its move. The story is heart wrenching, yet the characters too engrossing to make the reader easily put the book down. The kindness shown by strangers occasionally sweetens the bitter deal that life has dealt the family, and shows that there are decent people around. The story is topical, and gives a refugee's perspective on the current crisis making global headlines.

Excellent book and well written but the ending left you hanging and didn't provide any closure. This book could have been over the top but the ending was very disappointing.

This is an exquisitely written story of a loving, middle-class family's once idyllic life in Kabul, Afghanistan, collapsing beneath Soviet rockets and later crumbling under despotism by the Taliban. In first person, the story described how Fereiba Waziri, pregnant with her third child, lost her husband, Mahmood. Fereiba had known loss all of her life, but with the loss of her husband, and her personal histories with loss, she was limited in her coping capabilities. Although hesitant and fearful, she realized she had to pick up the pieces of her life, and go on without Mahmood. Mahmood was a freethinker in their society. He and Fereiba had solidified their marriage with profound love and trust, openly discussing everything. Yet, Fereiba always respected Mahmood's final decision in matters. However, she later regretted they had not moved to London earlier and, sometimes, I think, she made ill-considered decisions. Fereiba and the children were vulnerable and immersed in their grief. Although grieving, she had to remain calm and clear headed in front of the children. Her daughter, Samira, became mute, lacking the verbal ability to explain what troubled her. Her son, Saleem, at fifteen, was at the age where he was unwilling to share his problems with others. Inside, he mourned his father's death. He felt confused, had ambivalent attitudes concerning his brother and anger towards his mother. Fereiba had to relearn the world without her husband. She fled with her children and infant son, Aziz, to safe houses in Iran before landing in Turkey. Saleem's story is told in omniscient point of view. This is really Saleem's story. Proud, and strong-willed, he refused to keel over to pity. His dreams became deferred. He had to mature quickly without the guidance of his father. In Turkey, he secured the family lodging with a kind, retired Professor, Hakan and his wife, Hayal. Saleem worked on a tomato farm to help with their savings. He even befriended a boy his age, but their friendship was short-lived because of Fereiba's decision to leave

Turkey. When the family arrived in Greece, while Fereiba cleaned hotel rooms, often Saleem provided food for them in ways he was not proud of. He discovered the dismal gloom of Afghan refugees in Athens. At night, males in their teens and twenties, slept in a park under makeshift tents. During the day, they scrounged for food from restaurants or refused or received sandwiches from aide workers. Refugees could not obtain asylum. They could not acquire jobs. Like Saleem's family, they too wanted asylum in Europe and feared forced repatriation. When the Waziri's had saved enough to reach Italy, Saleem and his mother were separated two days before their departure. He was arrested by police and returned to Turkey. Fereiba, faced with her deathly ill infant, realized she had to leave without Saleem. Several weeks later, alone, Saleem reached Italy, and became acquainted with the dark, purgatorial, underbelly society of Rome with its unforgiving, hardened criminals. Yet, he would not give up his dream of reuniting with his family. So, he made brave decisions a boy should not have to make at his age. But he was between adolescence and adulthood. He would survive. I enjoyed the story immensely. I gave it five stars.

A beautifully compelling novel about one family's struggle for survival as the Taliban rises to power in Afghanistan. The story is told from the alternating view points of Fereiba and her son Saleem. Fereiba's story starts when she is a young girl married off to a near stranger; a man who becomes her soulmate and love of her life. As a married woman with children and an educated teacher, Fereiba's life is shattered as the Taliban and its fundamentalist regime, rises to power. Her husband is targeted and Fereiba and her children are forced to flee their home and country. As they attempt to reach England, they find themselves in dangerous territory going from Afghanistan to Turkey to Greece and so forth. When Fereiba is separated from Saleem and forced to travel on with her two youngest children, she wonders if she will see her son again. The story is compelling and heart wrenching. The struggle of these refugees is real and the utter despair they feel at their circumstances is palpable. I was fascinated up until the end when I was left with a very unsatisfactory conclusion that left the ending open to the reader's imagination, rather than giving us real closure. The ending was so abrupt and disappointing to me that I actually compared my electronic copy with the print copy, thinking that perhaps I was missing some pages. Nope. I wish I could just go with my initial impressions for this review, but the lack of a substantial ending left a bitter aftertaste. I received a complimentary copy for review. My opinions are my own.

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