

APPENDIX I

SUMMARY OF *THE PEARL THAT BROKE ITS SHELL*

The Pearl That Broke Its Shell, first published in 2014, is the debut novel by Afghan-American novelist Nadia Hashimi. Set in Kabul in 2007, it centers on a girl named Rahima and her sisters, who struggle in a family run by their drug-addicted father, Arif. With no brothers, their ability to leave the house, attend school, or earn money is limited. Rahima finds hope in the ancient custom of “bacha posh”, which allows her to dress and be treated as a boy until she reaches marriageable age. She soon learns that she was not the first woman in her family to embrace this custom, and she goes on a journey of discovery about her family’s history and the story of her great-great-grandmother Shekiba through her aunt Khala Shaima.

Rahima and her sisters want to attend school, but Arif won’t let them. Khala Shaima tells her about the custom of bacha posh, where Rahima will dress as a boy, attend school, and run errands for the family. Rahima loves being able to wear pants and interact with boys her age, although she feels uncomfortable when approached by older men, including warlord Abdul Khaliq, who has his eye on her. She chooses to stay a “bacha posh” longer than expected, which angers her father. After she gets into an argument with her mother, her father decides to marry Rahima off to Abdul Khaliq, as well as to marry her older sisters Parwin and Shahla off to Abdul Khaliq’s cousins. The women of the family are devastated when he arranges the triple wedding. As the wedding day approaches, Khala Shaima tells the girls about their great-great-grandmother Shekiba. Shekiba was scarred by hot oil when she was a child, leading her to be rejected by those outside her family. She lost her family to cholera and her father to a broken heart soon after, and she continued to tend the family land. The hard labor gave her a mannish appearance, and she was kept on as a servant when her extended family took over the land.

Rahima is Abdul Khaliq’s fourth and youngest wife; he favors Rahima, but the other wives hate her. To avoid beatings from him and his ruthless mother, Rahima obeys his every demand. Shekiba finds herself in the custody of Azizullah and his wife Marjan, who work her hard and try to keep her from reclaiming her rightful land. They give her to the king, where she’ll serve as a bacha posh guard for his harem. She befriends the lead guard, Ghafoor, but is

hesitant to trust anyone. She finds that when she becomes a guard, she feels freer than she ever has in her life. Like Rahima, she loves the freedom of pants. Rahima meets her housemate Shahnaz, who shows her around, but is jealous of her. Badriya, Abdul Khaliq's first wife, hates her and treats her as a servant, but Rahima finds a friend in Jameela, the second wife who becomes her ally. Badriya has a son, Hashmat. Rahima soon has a son, who she names Jahangir.

Shekiba fits into palace life, ignoring rude treatment from the women of the harem. She proves herself useful, having the strength of a man. She sees a man sneaking in and out of the harem quarters but is unable to catch him. Khala Shaima suggests to Rahima that she go with Badriya to Kabul to attend parliament sessions to further her education. As Badriya can't read and Rahima can, she allows her to join her as her assistant. Jameela looks after Jahangir in the meantime, and Rahima enjoys her time in Kabul. She attends a resource center established for women of the parliament so that they can improve their skills. But during one of Rahima's visits to Kabul, Jahangir dies from an illness. Although Abdul Khaliq's mother is to blame for not treating him properly, Rahima is blamed, and her husband brutally beats her. She no longer sees a purpose in her life with him. After mourning her son, Rahima returns to Kabul with Badriya and shares her story with Sufia and Hamida, two parliamentarians she befriended. They introduce her to Ms. Franklin, the teacher at the resource center.

Rahima's aunt continues to share stories about Shekiba. Shekiba sees the king's son, Amanullah, around the palace and comes up with a plan to marry him. She tells him that she comes from a line of women who bear mostly sons. Amanullah is always accompanied by his friend and advisor Agha Aasif Baraan. However, her plan is ruined when Fatima, one of the women of the harem, falls ill. They move her into another room and find that another woman of the harem, Benafsha, is having an affair. Ghafoor, when called before the king for allowing this to happen, blames everything on Shekiba. She, along with Benafsha, is sentenced to death by stoning. While imprisoned, Shekiba asks Benafsha why she had an affair but doesn't get a real answer. Fortunately, Shekiba finds out that she'll be spared execution. Then, she finds out that Agha Aasif Baraan has requested her hand in marriage, and she figures out that it was he who had the affair with Benafsha. He wanted to spare Shekiba from a fate that he caused. Shekiba becomes his second wife, and he hopes she'll bear him a son, which she

does. His wife, Gulnaz, is aloof toward her, but Shekiba is otherwise treated well. She is glad she took the risks she did to find her relatively happy ending. On a visit to Kabul, Rahima feigns illness. She then puts on clothing she took from Hashmat, escapes the guard outside her room, and avoids detection by once again dressing as a boy. Taking a bus out of town, she meets Ms. Franklin at a cafe, where the teacher sends her to a woman's shelter far away from Abdul Khaliq. Rahima writes a letter to Khala Shaima, who is old and sick now, and tells her she's escaped and will be free now. Rahima signs the letter with her new name, Bibi Shekiba.

APPENDIX II

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Hashimi was born on December 12, 1977 in Queens, New York to Afghan parents. Her parents immigrated to the United States in the early 1970s. Her mother obtained a Masters degree in Civil Engineering in Holland. Her parents intended to return to Afghanistan after a few years, but the country became unsafe as a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Nadia is fortunate to be surrounded by a large family of aunts, uncles and cousins, keeping the Afghan culture an integral part of their daily lives. Nadia obtained degrees in Middle Eastern Studies and Biology in Brandeis University. In 2002, she came to Afghanistan for the first time with her parents. Nadia enrolled in medical school in Brooklyn and became active with an Afghan-American community organization that promoted cultural events and awareness, especially in the dark days after 9/11. She graduated from medical school and went on to complete her pediatric training at NYU/Bellevue hospitals in New York City. Her debut novel, *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* was released in 2014. All of her works reflect women condition in Afghanistan. Her second novel, *When The Moon Is Low* released in 2015 is about the perilous journey of an Afghan family as they fled Taliban-controlled Kabul and fell into the dark world of Europe's undocumented. Her novels *The House without Window* and *One Half from the East* were published in 2016. Her latest literary work entitled *The Sky at Our Feet* was published in 2018.