



My Forbidden Face: Growing Up Under the Taliban: A Young Woman's Story

Latifa Latifa

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An astonishing first-hand account of a young woman's life lived under the tyranny of the Taliban. Born into a middle-class Afghan family in Kabul in 1980, Latifa spent her teenage days talking fashion and movies with her friends, listening to music, and dreaming of one day becoming a journalist. Then, on September 26, 1996, Taliban soldiers seized power in Kabul. Suddenly, streets were deserted. Her school was closed. Phones were cut. The radio fell silent. And from that moment, Latifa, just sixteen years old, became a prisoner in her own home. The simplest and most basic freedoms like walking down the street alone or even looking out of a window were forbidden. Latifa had never worn a veil before, but was now forced to be swathed in a chadri, the state-mandated uniform that covered her entire body. Her disbelief at having to hide her face was soon replaced by fear, the fear of being whipped or stoned like the other women she'd seen in the streets. Latifa struggled against an overwhelming sense of helplessness and despair. In a step of defiance, she set up a clandestine school in her home for a small number of young girls. To avoid arousing suspicion, the children were not allowed to attend every day, nor could they keep regular hours. Latifa knew that she was risking her life for something that could change little. But the teaching gave her a reason to get up in the morning, it helped restore meaning in her life. Latifa eventually escaped to Europe with her parents. My Forbidden Face provides a poignant and highly personal account of life under the Taliban regime. With painful honesty and clarity, Latifa describes her ordered world falling apart, in the name of fanaticism that she could not comprehend, and replaced by a world where terror and oppression reign. Latifa and her parents escaped Afghanistan in May 2001 and were brought to Europe in an operation organized by a French-based Afghan resistance group and Elle Magazine. Since then she has been writing My Forbidden Face in collaboration with Chekeba Hachemi, the founder of Afghanistan Libre. They both live in Paris. This is her first book.

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