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# Naema Tahir

## *Bride of Death*

Original title: *Bruid van de dood*

NOVEL

How a girl growing up between two cultures chooses for a radical form of Islam

A fascinating novel about the psychology of modern martyrdom

**‘In a compelling style, Tahir describes her struggle to become an independently thinking and acting individual, Muslim and feminist. [...] Poignant, but without exaggerated caricature.’ – Anet Bleich**

## About the author

Naema Tahir (1970) was born in Great Britain, but at the age of ten emigrated to the Netherlands with her Pakistani parents. After a stay of two years in Pakistan, she returned to the Netherlands when she was sixteen. She read law in Leiden and subsequently worked as a human rights lawyer for various Dutch ministries, the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

In 2005 she made her debut as a writer with the collection of essays *A MUSLIM GIRL UNVEILS*. She subsequently published *PRIZED POSSESSION*, a collection of startling, erotic stories. In 2008 she decided to turn to writing full-time, publishing the collection of 'fairy tales' *LITTLE GREEN RIDING HOOD AND THE CONVERTED WOLF* and the novel *LONELINESSES*. 20,000 copies of *LONELINESSES* have been sold so far.

'I draw partly on my own experiences as an immigrant and on those of the people around me. But I also draw on my own personal and professional research, both as a writer and as a lawyer. In particular, I am exploring the self-experienced conflict between modernity and tradition. I am also exploring the migrant struggle, that inability to really belong somewhere, and the ban on putting down roots and becoming truly Western. By the time I was fifteen I had migrated five times, between England, the Netherlands and Pakistan. I will also continue to build on my earlier work, treating certain themes more in-depth, particularly martyrdom and identity, and the psychology of the outsider and the marginalised.'

– *Naema Tahir*



## About the book

Sophia grows up in a Pakistani family that has settled in Rotterdam. Her parents cling to the Muslim traditions of their home country. One of these traditions involves finding a suitable husband for their daughter. A first cousin living in London seems to be the ideal match. Sophia, who has always managed to reconcile her life outside the parental home with the strict demands set by her parents, feels like Andersen's little mermaid. She longs for another world. A world that can only be attained if she makes a great sacrifice. The marriage her parents have arranged for her is the final straw. Sophia rebels and tries every trick in the book

to prolong her engagement. When starts reading law, she immerses herself in the social and cultural background of modern martyrdom, under the pretext of a study of its legal aspects. Perhaps martyrdom is the only path for her.

Naema Tahir, *Bruid van de dood*  
ISBN 978 90 445 1550 3  
Hardcover, 224 pages  
Publication: January 2011

## **Bibliography**

*Een moslima ontsluit* (A MUSLIM GIRL UNVEILS) (nonfiction, Uitgeverij Houtekiet 2005)  
*Kostbaar bezit* (PRIZED POSSESSION) (novel, Prometheus 2006)  
*Eenzaam heden* (LONELINESSES) (novel, Prometheus 2008)  
*Groenkapje en de bekeerde wolf* (LITTLE GREEN RIDING HOOD AND THE CONVERTED WOLF) (fairy tales, Meulenhoff 2008)  
*Bruid van de dood* (BRIDE OF DEATH) (novel, De Geus 2010)

## **The press on LONELINESSES**

‘Tahir’s new novel LONELINESSES shows that she means business.’ – *de Volkskrant*

‘Pakistani-British-Dutch Naema Tahir uses her sensual language to bring us a somewhat harrowing but also heartening novel about migrants’ perpetual homesickness.’ – *Esta*

‘Human rights activist Naema Tahir’s second novel makes it very clear – in exquisitely detailed descriptions of a culture completely alien to us – that it is precisely the oppressed Pakistani women who call the shots. Certainly in bed. Exciting and beautifully written.’ – *Elle*

‘With this book Tahir [...] proves that she is a truly gifted writer.’ – *Thomas van den Bergh* in *Elsevier*

## **The press on PRECIOUS POSSESSION**

‘Naema Tahir, born in England and raised in the Netherlands, has put a great deal of herself into this splendid book. Lots of fine sentences and plenty of humour. A worthy successor to LONELINESSES, Tahir’s debut last year.’ – *Het Nieuwsblad* (Belgium)

‘Tahir writes sensual prose [...]. We have a great deal to look forward to from this writer, who has the courage to use her imagination to tread untrodden paths.’ – *de Volkskrant*

‘PRECIOUS POSSESSION is Naema Tahir’s glittering literary debut. In a subtle, sensuous style, she recounts the ups and downs of three powerful women – each connected in some way to the Netherlands – in the Pakistani city of Lahore.’ – *Bookcrossing.com*

### **The press on A MUSLIM GIRL UNVEILS**

‘Topics such as sex, hospitality and the difference between natives and immigrants are treated light-heartedly and humorously.’ – *NRC Handelsblad*

‘A novelistic and witty autobiographical narrative, brimming with criticism of inflexible manifestations of faith and peppered with opinions about sexuality and Muslims. [Tahir] calls the headscarf, for instance, “a gentlemen’s agreement, intended to facilitate control of women” and pleads for “self-defloration”.’ – *Vrij Nederland*

‘Tahir introduces nuances into the heated debate about the position of Islam in the West.’ – *Gazet van Antwerpen*

‘A very readable book by a young woman who, despite all the ensuing emotional problems, chose to take fate in her own hands. Her testimony about the difficult battle that many Muslim women are waging to liberate themselves from their traditions, paints a disconcerting picture of what is currently happening in numerous immigrant families in the West. In this way Naema Tahir breaks the *omertà*, that – together with cultural relativism – has made impossible for too long the much-needed debate about the equality of men and women in the Muslim world.’ – *Dirk Verhofstadt in De Morgen*

‘A MUSLIM GIRL UNVEILS is exceptionally cutting about such things as the fetish of virginity. At other moments, especially when discussing the headscarf, Tahir proves that she has far more insight than the average immigrant spokesperson.’ – *Humo*

‘Naema Tahir has remarkable vision, humour, plus a remarkable talent not to take herself too seriously.’ – *Haagse Courant*

‘Anyone who is in danger of becoming despondent about the Islam debate can seek solace in A MUSLIM GIRL UNVEILS. [...] A realistic look at how the ideals of the Enlightenment can be used to counter fundamentalism.’ – *de Volkskrant*

‘In a clear, literary style, Tahir makes a personal and persuasive plea for a woman’s right to make her own decisions about her body, sexuality and life. Her expertise, and the restrained style with which she tackles the issues in the ongoing debate about immigrants, Islam and the position of women, is striking.’ – *NBD/Biblion*