

In the Time of Our History

Susanne Pari

John Scognamiglio Books (Jan 3, 2023)

Softcover \$16.95 (384pp)

978-1-4967-3926-1

Susanne Pari's *In the Time of Our History* is a sprawling story of loss and healing in the immigrant experiences of an Iranian American family.

Sisters Anahita and Mitra are each other's opposites. Anahita, the favorite, is married with children and lives according to Iranian traditions. Mitra, the rebel, embraces her American identity and strikes out on her own. Their loving but contentious relationship is cut short when Anahita and her two children are killed in a car accident.

Estranged from her father and with a complicated relationship to her mother, Mitra returns home for the one-year anniversary of Anahita's death. As the family gathers in remembrance, the lies woven to keep the family's honor intact are exposed. Protective of her younger sister even after she has died, Mitra embraces her defiant role to find the truth, but her actions threaten to shatter her family by forcing confrontations that are long overdue.

This vibrant story is told in intricate, heartfelt detail. Mitra and Anahita's Iranian American extended family is haunted by the trauma of exile. They live under pressure and face culture clashes and generational confrontations. Iran is a constant presence in everyone's minds, and life becomes a balancing act between multiple identities, languages, and value systems. People are torn between the old country and the new. A parallel, complementary story about a mother and daughter in exile from Iran further reveals the challenges posed by the patriarchy to women of all ages.

In the Time of Our History is a heartfelt story about a family whose members seek healing while in exile.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (January / February 2023)

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