



The Stoning of Soraya M.: A True Story

Freidoune Sahebjam, Richard Seaver (Translator)

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Soraya M.'s husband, Ghorban-Ali, couldn't afford to marry another woman. Rather than returning Soraya's dowry, as custom required before taking a second wife, he plotted with four friends and a counterfeit mullah to dispose of her. Together, they accused Soraya of adultery. Her only crime was cooking for a friend's widowed husband. Exhausted by a lifetime of abuse and hardship, Soraya said nothing, and the makeshift tribunal took her silence as a confession of guilt. They sentenced her to death by stoning: a punishment prohibited by Islam but widely practiced. Day by day sometimes minute by minute Sahebjam deftly recounts these horrendous events, tracing Soraya's life with searing immediacy, from her arranged marriage and the births of her nine children to her husband's increasing cruelty and her horrifying execution, where, by tradition, her father, husband, and sons hurled the first stones.

This is one woman's story, but it stands for the stories of thousands of women who suffered and continue to suffer the same fate. It is a story that must be told.

The Stoning of Soraya M.: A True Story Details

Date : Published April 1st 2007 by Arcade Publishing (first published September 12th 1990)

ISBN : 9781559702706

Author : Freidoune Sahebjam , Richard Seaver (Translator)

Format : Paperback 160 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Cultural, Iran, Religion, Biography, Islam, History, Feminism, Media Tie In, Movies, Crime, True Crime, Biography Memoir



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Rinda Elwakil says

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AMEERA says

one thing just hurt me about this book it's * true story *

Huda Yahya says

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Nancy Oakes says

Let me begin by offering a quotation from the preface:

"After the shah was deposed and the fundamentalist regime headed by the Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in February 1979, many dubious elements of the population, including common-law criminals who had been jailed for good reason under the shah, were released from the country's prisons. Taking advantage of the religious fervor sweeping the land, a number of these people, especially those with at least a basic knowledge of the Koran and its tenets, donned clerics' garb, gave themselves the title of mullah, and roamed the country seeing opportunities for self-enrichment or, quite simply, to conceal their past from the authorities."

In 1986, the author was waiting in a small mountain village in Iran for a contact to take him over the border into Pakistan, when he was offered tea by an elderly woman. She then proceeded to tell him that two weeks earlier, her niece Soraya had been stoned to death for being unfaithful to her husband, and that she had been innocent of the charge. The author's contact showed up and he had to leave, but he promised the woman he'd be back, and he returned some six months later to hear her story, which ended up being the substance of this book. The book recalls a beyond-horrible crime instigated by one of these above-mentioned mullahs in cahoots with Soraya's husband. This mullah (Sheik Hassan) had been in prison and was running away from the regime that put him there. He had fled to a small village of about 250 people where he was able to

quickly gain the trust of the village leaders and become the go-to guy for settling disputes, and he was able to profit monetarily from his position as well. The sheik's background is important, because he represents one of those people whose position allowed him to manipulate religious beliefs for his own gain, and in this particular case, vengeance.

The basic story is this. Soraya's parents had betrothed her to Ghorban-Ali whom she had known since childhood and whom she didn't like even then. He was an abusive husband and later father, who would beat his wife regularly and then start in on his children. He spent a great deal of time turning his two older children against their mother. When he wasn't in the village, he was involved in black-market and other illegal activities until the change in regime, when he became a prison guard and realized his potential for power over others. Once he got a taste for power and life in the city (and the gains he'd made financially and materially in his position as prison guard) he no longer wanted to be a peasant from the village, but instead wanted to live the life of Riley in the city complete with a 14 year old honey that he wanted to marry. The problem was his marriage to Soraya, and how to get rid of her; ultimately with no way out of the marriage, he turned to Sheik Hassan. And this is when Soraya's life went from one of abuse to one of utter horror.

There are a couple of things worth mentioning. First, there is no doubt that this event actually happened, and there is no doubt that stoning as a punishment for adultery is a reality among some Muslim fundamentalists in some areas. You can go to any human rights organization's website and find out all that you want to know about it there and to be fair, you can go to the website of Al-jazeera (an Islamic news organization) to read about recent developments about stoning as well. It is also an abominable practice that is beyond my scope of comprehension in the realm of human cruelty.

Second, there's no doubt in my mind that as far as the story this book tells, the stoning of Soraya M. a) reflects a plan conceived by a few misogynistic individuals who deliberately used the existing Sharia laws for their own personal gain and b) was allowed to happen as a result of an abuse of power in this small village.

To get the full story, you need to read the book. It is a difficult story but an eye-opening one that you will probably not soon forget. I know I won't. I don't think I need to see it on the big screen, though.

Denise says

"Over the past 15 years more than 1,000 women have been stoned to death in Iran..."

Soraya was married and the mother of nine children. She lived in a small village in rural Iran. Her marriage had been arranged by her father. Her husband was a conniving, brutal man who beat both his wife and his children, slept with other women, and did little to provide for his family. Under Islamic law, if a woman is accused of infidelity by her husband, she has to prove her innocence or suffer a punishment (death by stoning). Soraya was innocent of the charge. But her husband wanted to take a new wife and would be required to return Soraya's dowry under the same Islamic law (something he didn't want to do). So he spread the rumor of her infidelity with a widowed neighbor and she was found guilty by her male family members and townsmen. What resulted was an example of how politics and religion can be used by unscrupulous individuals to create terror and death in a society. A MUST read for all women everywhere!

Mohamed Al says

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Crumb says

An illustration of life in the Middle East and one woman's journey from valued wife to a fallen woman. *How did this happen? Three Men Made It Happen.*

Soraya was a devoted housemaker and loving mother, despite knowledge of her husband falling out of love with her - knowledge of her husband being unfaithful to her. But that's just fine *said sarcastically*. Men can do whatever they please. A woman? If she makes the same indiscretion, her life would end.

Soraya begins to detach from her husband because of this and he gets furious at her audaciousness and rebellious streak. Hatching a plan with two of the neighboring villagers, Soraya finds herself in the middle of a nightmare. To her detriment, She is accused of cheating on her husband. Her real crime, you might wonder? (view spoiler). In moments it seems, the villagers become rabid, demanding justice. An appropriate punishment is meted out. ***A Stoning.*** . . .

This scene was devastating, terrifying, and heart-breaking. I've heard from fellow GR's that the movie is worse. Times like this demand gratitude for being a woman born in the U.S. In one of the 'right' places to exercise freedom over gender. More often than not being given a chance to break through that invisible, but glaring glass ceiling. Although things certainly don't make any sense in this country right now . . . I still have to appreciate where I am and pray for those who are less fortunate.

Amel El idrissi says

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Omnya says

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Ahmed Oraby says

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Aliaa Mohamed says