



Skunk Girl

Sheba Karim

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If Nina Khan were to rate herself on the unofficial Pakistani prestige point system – the one she's sure all the aunts and uncles use to determine the most attractive marriage prospects for their children – her scoring might go something like this:

+2 **points** for getting excellent grades

–3 **points** for failing to live up to expectations set by genius older sister

+4 **points** for dutifully obeying parents and never, ever going to parties, no matter how antisocial that makes her seem to everyone at Deer Hook High

–1 **point** for harboring secret jealousy of her best friends, who are allowed to date like normal teenagers

+2 **points** for never drinking an alcoholic beverage

–10 **points** for obsessing about Asher Richelli, who talks to Nina like she's not a freak at all, even though he knows that she has a disturbing line of hair running down her back

In this wryly funny debut novel, the smart, sassy, and utterly lovable Nina Khan tackles friends, family, and love, and learns that it's possible to embrace two very different cultures – even if things can get a little bit, well, *hairy*.

Skunk Girl Details

Date : Published March 31st 2009 by Farrar Straus Giroux

ISBN : 9780374370114

Author : Sheba Karim

Format : Hardcover 240 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Fiction, Realistic Fiction, Cultural, Humor, Contemporary

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From Reader Review Skunk Girl for online ebook

Abeer Hoque says

When you read this review, keep in mind that "Skunk Girl" was written by one of my best friends in the whole world:) I've read a lot of Sheba's writing over the years and I love her style which is so breezy and grounded.

I started laughing from page 1 of SG, and not just because of the Jolene and SAT antonyms and the fact that we're hearing a story about South Asian immigrant lives. Naturally, overbearing traditionalist parents and obsessive academic regimes are resonant themes with me, and it's great to finally get a window open in that house, but more so, the writing in SG is light and witty and humourous and the teenage protagonist, Nina Khan, is actually loveable, as the book jacket promises (prompts?).

The dialogue and pacing is great, and I found myself wanting to know what Nina was going to do or think next, even if it was just a tiny tumult versus a grand upheaval. Her two best friends are nicely depicted (though it took me some time to separate them in my head). I especially enjoyed her father's character.

Some of the interactions and conversations seemed overly mature, but maybe I'm not giving teenagers their due:) That said, SG was an absolute pleasure to read, and I SO wish it had been around 20 years ago when I was 15, and I wouldn't have been felt so much the only lonely hairy girl out there.

Elisha Hollis says

Skunk Girl was actually an eye-opening book for me. It made me realize that my problems are actually really minuscule compared to some. I really enjoyed reading it. I picked it up just because I had finished my book a few hours before my English class. But, I am really glad that I read it. It follows the life of Nina Khan, a Pakistani Muslim girl living in the United States. It shows what it's like to live a traditional Muslim life while being a teenager in America. I think it depicts what most teens and people in general don't think about Muslims. That aside from what the Americans think about them, they have their own set of problems. I would recommend this book to really anyone, honestly. All people need to know about what is shown in this book.

Cecilia says

Although skunk girl channeled the typical girl-likes-boy-but-too-uncool-to-get-him-to-notice story, I thought it was still pretty unique since Nina came from a South Asian background. One of my very good friends from college is Pakistani, so as I read skunk girl, I was picturing my friend as Nina and wondering how her high school experience went. Not to mention, I could semi-relate to Nina's experiences since I am Vietnamese - a similar social situation, though I would say that Nina was more successful in breaking free earlier :)

Yet I was not entirely convinced that Asher was worth all that effort. He might have that dreamy Italian accent, but I got the impression that he was quite a "player" even if he did not seem arrogant and did not

mean to break every girl's heart. But I guess I cannot fault Nina - who can resist looking at the pretty boys, even if they may not be Mr. Right?

The great thing about skunk girl is how realistic I found it. I laughed at Nina's woes concerning her South Asian "curse" and sympathized as her parents heaped responsibility and tradition upon her, but I hoped that she would eventually appreciate her parents, her family, her culture. Nina chooses to sneak out to a party in hopes to see Asher and do some underage drinking with her friends, but quickly finds out that it may not be for her. It was nice to see Nina make not the greatest decisions and learn from them.

skunk girl was a pretty cute book with a narrator who had a great sense of humor as she experienced her growing pains. It reminded me of Bend It Like Beckham, but with less soccer and more high school drama.

[Complete review here](#)

pdbkwm says

I first heard about Skunk Girl after a friend of mine posted the cover on Facebook. I thought it was funny and wondered if Skunk Girl was about a girl who smells. It isn't. Instead, this is a book about a hairy Pakistani Muslim.

Awesome!

There are not that many books about Muslims out there, so once I saw this at the library, I wasted no time in picking it up. Was it everything that I wanted and more? Sadly, no. But I think this is due to my expectations for this novel. I originally thought it would be about a hairy Muslim teenager coping with Islam in a non-Islamic society. Let me explain: from the synopsis, we can see that she has a huge crush on Asher. She wants him, but in Islam we don't date. We get married. So the challenges of being like everyone else while still trying to keep your religion in tact is something a lot of us face, and so, I was hoping to see that here.

Instead, this is mostly a story about a teen girl who has strict parents who constantly compare her to her older sister. She has a crush on a new guy who might just like her too. And she has hair...growing...everywhere.

Except that it's not. There's no real plot in this novel, just a series of events that are joined together. There are many conflicts that are presented, which are interesting, but they're never really resolved. And by the end of the novel, you're left wondering, 'Is that it?'

Even though Nina is one I can easily relate to, I just couldn't like her or care about her. Wait, wait. I'm not saying this because she wanted to do things that were considered unIslamic. That's normal for a girl her age. And it's not that she did unIslamic things either. What I had a problem with was Nina's interaction with the 'mean girl' Serena. Nina hates her and doesn't hide it at all. Why? Because of an incident when they were kids. This made me sympathize with Serena and made me want to slap Nina a few times.

They do come to a sort of understanding, but the interactions between the two were clearly in Serena's favour. Was this supposed to happen though? I don't think so. I think we're meant to root for Nina, but when it came to these two I just couldn't.

There are some good points though. Nina's parents, while strict, are not bad people, nor are they depicted that way. And Nina's best friends are developed nicely as well. And I did like that Nina discovered a sort of balance at the end and that she learned from her mistakes, I just wish the journey to this was done better. And that Islam and her culture had a bigger role, instead of just being a means to restrict Nina's freedom.

Laura says

Nina's parents are Pakistani Muslims, while she wants to be an Americanized teenager. She's got two girlfriends, both white, and a crush on the new boy Asher. Problem is, of course, getting her parents to allow her to do anything that might involve boys, dating, dancing, etc., which of course they won't because they want her to be a good girl. Asher appears to like her, though...

The ending is, I think, supposed to let us know that Nina has somehow made peace with her American and Pakistani sides; it just comes across as a tacked-on coda.

Skunk Girl is set in the 1990s, and I'm guessing that is because the author grew up in a similar situation during that time. Because there's no real reason for it to be set then (by which I mean there's no great event or person that would require it to be set in the '90s), the lack of cell phones, texting, computers and all the other teen "stuff" stands out.

Sneha Kedar says

I ordered this book for my sister(a teen), as she was fascinated by the title 'Skunk Girl'. Well, she read it and kept on saying me that this book rocks. It made me curious and I thought of reading it too. So, here I am writing the review of 'Skunk Girl'.

Let me start with the basic idea of story.

Nina Khan is a sixteen year old Pakistani girl who was born and brought up in Deer Hook. Coming from conservative Pakistani family, she has many restrictions. No sleepovers, no parties, no talking to boys and many more... While her friends enjoy weekend and parties, Nina has to stay at home and study. And more to her frustration, she is hairy!! A long strip of black hair runs down on her back which resembles 'Skunk'. And guess who saw it? Her crush 'Asher Richelli', a cute new Italian transfer student.

Does she stand any chance to impress Asher?

Will her life be more interesting, even after so many restrictions?

Nina is always compared to her elder sister, who is supernerd, and her parents wish Nina excel in exams just like her supernerd sister.

The book starts on interesting note, with Nina giving introduction about her Parents and their love for Pakistani culture. It grabs the readers interest as we keep on turning the pages. The author has done a wonderful job of keeping the readers hooked to each and every chapter by adding all sort of possible humor. I bet you can't help yourself but to laugh as you go on reading further.

Author has used some cheesy dialogues which will make you giggle for sure.

"Nina, don't talk to boys or you will get pregnant." Says Nina's mom.

"Sonia is in Harvard, but Nina will go to Yale University." Nina's parents keeps on saying everyone, making

her life more complicated!

“Why is the watering can kept in bathroom? They don’t use toilet papers in Pakistan?” Nina’s American friend ask and she replies “It is called Lota.”

The clash between two culture – traditional Pakistani culture and Modern American culture is perfectly explained. And the protagonist Nina Khan is the sufferer of this clash.

What I liked about the book is beautiful character developments and beautiful way of telling story. Language used is simple yet catchy.

But the book don’t have a proper plot(if you are looking for any) as it is a series of events put together . Though the book is targeted to Young Adults, I loved reading it. A light read and it definitely refreshes the reader with the humor.I’ll give 3.5/5 to the book.

Warren says

Nina Khan wants to experience life. Her parents want to protect her from the evils of the world. Nina lives in Deer Hook, New York, a small town outside of Albany. Her dad is a doctor and her mom runs his office. Nina is a junior in high school. She is also living in the shadow of her older sister, Sonia, who excelled in high school and now is attending Harvard. Oh, did I mention that Nina is Pakistani and Muslim? Skunk Girl, written by Sheba Karim, tells the story of Nina’s struggles to fit in socially and still respect her parents’ wishes and her Muslim beliefs.

I really don’t know very much about Muslim beliefs and this book helped me to understand them better. They don’t believe in drinking alcohol and dating is not something young people do. Marriages are usually arranged by the parents and young girls and young boys don’t spend time together. Nina’s mother told her “Nina, remember that you should never be alone with a boy, ever. Because when a boy and a girl are alone together, there is always a third person with them.” That person is Shaitaan or the devil. Nina’s parents don’t let her attend parties and she spends her Friday evenings at home while all her friends are out at parties and having fun. Nina watched the evening news as the police were taking away a serial killer in handcuffs. The reporter stated that the killer was a quiet guy who was a loner and never attended social events. Nina thinks the only people who stay home on Friday nights are serial killers and Muslim girls.

So why Skunk Girl? Nina finds herself one day hairy. She has hairy arms, hairy legs, and hair on her upper lip. It isn’t the peach fuzz type but rather dark black hair. Her mother tells her to bleach it. When Asher, an Italian transfer student, moves to town she falls head over heels for him. But what can she do? Her parents would never let her date a boy! One day while she is sitting on the school bus next to Asher she leans over to look out the window and he notices that she has a streak of hair running down her back. She is mortified!

How can she ever face him again?

Will Nina follow her parents’ wishes and not see Asher or will she go behind their backs and have clandestine encounters with him? Skunk Girl was a fast read that tells of accepting one’s own beliefs and one’s own physical nature and being happy in the process.

Jessy says

Look authors, if you're about my age and your book for no apparent reason takes place in the 90s, I'm just going to assume you're too lazy to do research on "kids today".

First YA novel is not an excuse for thinly veiled memoir.

This book specific complaint: Holy all of a sudden, 3/4 of the way through the book self-esteem epiphany!

Meredith says

This was a fun read. It touched on a lot of "issues" without being an issue book - which is a great thing in my YA opinion. She's the daughter of Pakistani Muslims, living in a small town, has a growing changing body with which she's not always happy, one of the only "brown people" in her school, lusts after a guy who is going out with the beautiful popular girl, has a big sister with whom she's not very close and in whose academic shadow she labors, isn't allowed to date, and has embarrassing parents. Nina's obviously got a lot on her plate - just like every teenage girl - but she approaches each problem with the appropriate amount of drama and also a lot of humor, coming across as a very real, believable, yet charming girl. She loves her folks and honors their restrictions even as she is horribly embarrassed; she learns to talk to her sister and gains perspective; she's adorably tongue-tied around Asher (the object of her crush) but manages to have a sensible conversation with him eventually (and that much-awaited first kiss - which manages to be heady and fairly chaste at the same time); she deals with her body issues (mostly being hairy) with exasperation at her genetic heritage but also with humor and ultimate acceptance; she's got two good friends that she keeps (and there's even another, healthy interracial relationship in there), and even manages to come to terms with that rich, popular wench Asher had a fling with. I enjoyed this balanced, funny journey of Nina's junior year - rooting for Nina and laughing with her. A good, solid, totally acceptable and not shallow, fun read. Also the cover design is fantastic, with the texture of the fur.

Rachna says

I'd been wanting to read this for a while, as I've been trying to find more YA books that feature diverse stories. I thought the overall premise of this book was good, but the execution was not. I found myself wanting more character development all around, and plot development as well. It was all just there to read but not really feel. Additionally, I didn't feel as if there was resolution. I can understand why Nina made the decision she did, based on my own knowledge of the culture and community she comes from. However, she goes from a conversation with her sister to making the decision, and there really is no overall development to be shown for it. I would've liked to read more thoughts about it.

Rebecca McNutt says

Skunk Girl is creative and funny and shows the life of an everyday family in Pakistan. The main character was easy to relate to and really witty throughout.

Jamie says

I'm actually going to start this review by telling you a little bit about me. Just trust me and go with it. I read lots of blogs, but I very seldom read through the actual reviews. I hate being spoiled and even though most bloggers give adequate spoiler warnings, I'd rather be completely surprised when I pick up a book. So, you

will often hear see me say that I had no idea what a book was about before picking it up. I also never go to the library with a list. I go, pick up any new books I have on hold, and browse the shelves looking for something to catch my eye. This is how I found *Skunk Girl*. I didn't remember who had read it, what it was about, or if it was even good for that matter. I recognized it, laughed at the inside cover, and placed it in my bag. I was in no real hurry to read it since I had so many other goodies in my pile, but when I finally did, boy was I surprised.

Nina Khan just wants to be a normal teenager, except she's kind of a freak. She's hairy, Muslim, and under lockdown by her very strict, Pakistani parents. Luckily for her though, her American friends love her anyway. Nina is used to the social restrictions her family believes in; however, when cutie Asher Richelli starts paying her attention, she is determined to break away. In the end Nina learns that her family really isn't that bad and that some of the things she wished for are overrated.

I loved Nina's story. She was such a diverse character! I know, I know - it's mostly because she is a person of color with a completely different culture than my own, but I had to say it. Nina's narrative takes us straight into her head and lets us see, and feel, and think the things that she is seeing, and feeling, and thinking. Feeling so close to a character is always a good thing in my book, and her witty humor only added to my love for this debut novel. I hear Karim is working on a new book, and I cannot wait to read it.

I think it is so important for stories like Nina's to be told. Please check out *Reading in Color* and *S. Krishna's Books* if you aren't already familiar. Both of these blogs feature books by and/or about people of color, and both hold challenges with tons of suggestions for books like *Skunk Girl*.

Read more reviews like this one at <http://bookmarkedreviews.blogspot.com>

Amanda says

This was the kind of book that I sit back and think "what on earth was the point of this?" However, while I was reading it, I enjoyed it. It was interesting to read about a different culture, but the main character, Nina, was not a very interesting person. I think the thing that bothered me the most was that there was no resolution to her initial problem. She just kind of gets over the boy she likes and moves on because she doesn't want to tell her parents. I understand that the resolution is that she accepts herself as a Pakistani Muslim girl, but I feel like I wanted a more tangible ending. I have no suggestions as to what kind of ending I want, because every one I have come up with is incredibly unrealistic and would take about another one hundred pages to explain. I liked the way the book did not have numbered chapters, I liked the subheading that was given every so often. Most of them were really funny and catchy and made me want to continue reading. Overall, I could see how some people would find this book to be good, and I am certainly not telling you to avoid reading it, but it was not satisfying enough for me.

Namratha says

Skunk Girl is the emotional journey of a teenager called Nina.

Nina Khan

Nina lives in small-town Deer Hook, population 11,250. In her school, with its expected coterie of snobbish cheerleaders, handsome jocks and loving (*but sometimes clueless*) friends, brown-skinned Nina feels like the odd-one out.

The fact that she is a Pakistani-Muslim and comes from a conservative household means that she's often envious of the freedom that her friends take for granted. While being a fairly intelligent student herself, she has to constantly face comparisons with her super nerd, Harvard attending sister : Sonia. Nina suffers the secret pangs of being a fairly-hairy teenager and the added shock of discovering a thick strip of soft hair running down the center of her back (*ergo, the title*). She isn't allowed out on weekends and is constantly under her parents' radar, lest she becomes 'Americanized' or as her aunt would scathingly put it, "*umreecanized*".

So what happens when you throw in a handsome Italian boy called **Asher Richelli** who despite being wooed by the most popular girl (*and Nina's nemesis*), appears to be interested in the go-nowhere Nina?

I liked the book. I really did. Far more than I had anticipated. Coming from a fairly conservative South-Indian family myself, I associated with Nina's teenage frustrations. And maybe I enjoyed it more for the trips down memory-lane that it took me. I read out snarky sections to my mum and she gave me the cheeky smile cum weary resignation, as we remembered similar incidents.

Many might complain that Nina whined. A Lot. Let me just tell you that it's NOT an exaggeration. I whined and whinged. An embarrassing LOT! Maybe now, as an adult, I understand where my parents were coming from. Evolved thought-processes have taken their time to settle in. But yep, teendom was an angry canvas of red-faced me, bawling out at the unfairness of it all.

Nina Khan's story is believable and entertaining. It has a nice vein of self-deprecating humour running through it. The ending could either be termed as realistic or a bit surprising, consider your outlook. Either way, it's a story by an author who has immersed herself into her plot and used it to maximum effect.

Ananya Percypotter says

Not the best, really...
