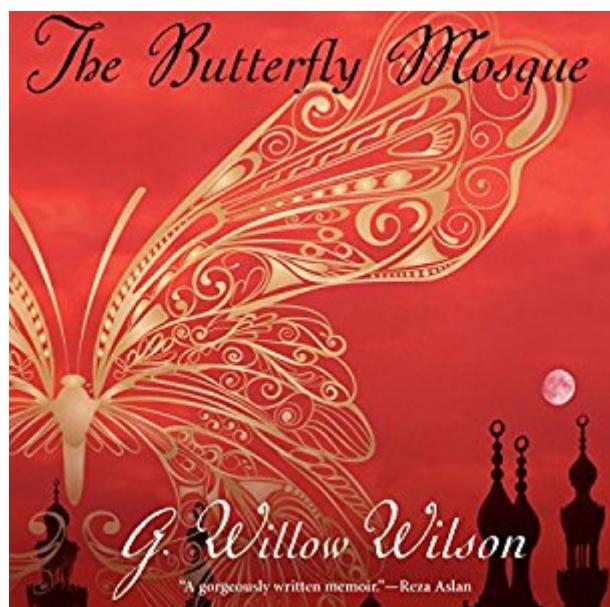


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The Butterfly Mosque: A Young American Woman's Journey To Love And Islam



Synopsis

The extraordinary story of an all-American girl's conversion to Islam and her ensuing romance with a young Egyptian man, The Butterfly Mosque is a stunning articulation of a Westerner embracing the Muslim world. When G. Willow Wilson - already an accomplished writer on modern religion and the Middle East at just 27 - leaves her atheist parents in Denver to study at Boston University, she enrolls in an Islamic Studies course that leads to her shocking conversion to Islam and sends her on a fated journey across continents and into an uncertain future. She settles in Cairo, where she teaches English and submerges herself in a culture based on her adopted religion. And then she meets Omar, a passionate young man with a mild resentment of the Western influences in his homeland. They fall in love, entering into a daring relationship that calls into question the very nature of family, belief, and tradition. Torn between the secular West and Muslim East, Willow records her intensely personal struggle to forge a "third culture" that might accommodate her own values without compromising the friends and family on both sides of the divide.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Butterfly Mosque is a lovely tale of an American woman's travel to Egypt and eventual marriage into a middle-class Egyptian family. The author is very intelligent and adept at making complex yet concise observations about life in a different culture. Much of the book is taken up by her day-to-day affairs and discovery of satisfaction in being a housewife: learning how to buy chickens in the market or becoming accustomed to differing gender relations such as not conversing with strange men and learning to accept and even welcome the protective attitude of men towards her. As such,

it would probably be better classified as travel writing than memoir. Her observations of American and Egyptian cultures are astute, however there are moments when she risks overgeneralizing, and is particularly harsh towards other Westerners. While perhaps deserved in some instances, she seems to fall into the phenomenon of those who have joined a new group and, having recently become aware of their past insensitivities and gaffs, are eager to distance themselves from others. I agree with other reviews that note the limited information about her 'journey to Islam'. The reasons she gives for her conversion seem somewhat superficial and leave the reader wanting more. Given its classification as a memoir, one also longs for more information about her American and Egyptian family and her relationship to them. Her sketches of family members are tender yet minimal. As written everyone seems generally happy and supportive about her conversion, marriage, and decision to live in Egypt. While this may be so, one can't help but wonder about tensions behind the scenes. Of course in a memoir it's always a delicate balance between what to keep private and what to expose.

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