



Yellow Crocus

By Laila Ibrahim

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Moments after Lisbeth is born, she's taken from her mother and handed over to an enslaved wet nurse, Mattie, a young mother separated from her own infant son in order to care for her tiny charge. Thus begins an intense relationship that will shape both of their lives for decades to come. Though Lisbeth leads a life of privilege, she finds nothing but loneliness in the company of her overwhelmed mother and her distant, slave-owning father. As she grows older, Mattie becomes more like family to Lisbeth than her own kin and the girl's visits to the slaves' quarters—and their lively and loving community—bring them closer together than ever. But can two women in such disparate circumstances form a bond like theirs without consequence? This deeply moving tale of unlikely love traces the journey of these very different women as each searches for freedom and dignity.

Revised edition: This edition of *Yellow Crocus* includes editorial revisions.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Yellow Crocus* is an engaging, thought-provoking story. It's a must-read for anyone who enjoys Antebellum historical fiction or is looking for a compelling story to add to their book club reading list." —Katerie Prio, ForeWord Clarin

From the Author

Writing *Yellow Crocus* was a labor of love. Years ago, in 1998, I was with a group of people talking about Tiger Woods. Someone mentioned that he identifies as much as an Asian person as an African-American person. I thought to myself, "Of course he does, his mother is Asian. You form your core identity in relationship to your primary caregivers. It's a basic part of the attachment process."

Then the image of Lisbeth, a white baby, breastfeeding in the loving arms of Mattie, an enslaved wet nurse came to me in a flash. I thought about what it would be like for Lisbeth to dearly love Mattie and then be taught by society that she wasn't a full person. I wondered how it would feel for Mattie to be forced to abandon Samuel, her own child, in the slave Quarters. Then I imagined what the experience would be like for Miss Anne, the birth mother, to have her own child twist away from her to get into Mattie's arms. These characters started to haunt me. Various scenes popped into my head. Though I had never written anything, I was being called to tell this story. Finally, for my fortieth birthday, I began the personal marathon of writing my first novel. I hope you will come to love these characters as much as I have.

From the Back Cover

Mattie was never truly mine. That knowledge must have filled me as quickly and surely as the milk from her breasts. Although my family 'owned' her, although she occupied the center of my universe, her deepest affections lay elsewhere. So along with the comfort of her came the fear that I would lose her some day. This is our story...

So begins Lisbeth Wainwright's compelling tale of coming-of-age in antebellum Virginia. Born to white plantation owners but raised by her enslaved black wet nurse, Mattie, Lisbeth's childhood unfolds on the line between two very different worlds. Growing up under the watchful eye of Mattie, the child adopts her surrogate mother's deep-seated faith in God, her love of music and black-eyed peas, and the tradition of hunting for yellow crocuses in the early days of spring. Yet Lisbeth has freedoms and opportunities that Mattie does not have, though the color of the girl's skin cannot protect her from the societal expectations placed on women born to privilege. As Lisbeth grows up, she struggles to reconcile her love for her caregiver with her parent's expectations, a task made all the more difficult as she becomes increasingly aware of the ugly realities of the American slavery system. When the inequality of her two worlds comes to a head during an act of shocking brutality, Lisbeth realizes she must make a choice, one that will require every ounce of the courage she learned from her beloved Mattie. This compelling historical novel is a richly evocative tale of love and redemption set during one of the darkest chapters of American history.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jennifer Phinney:

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