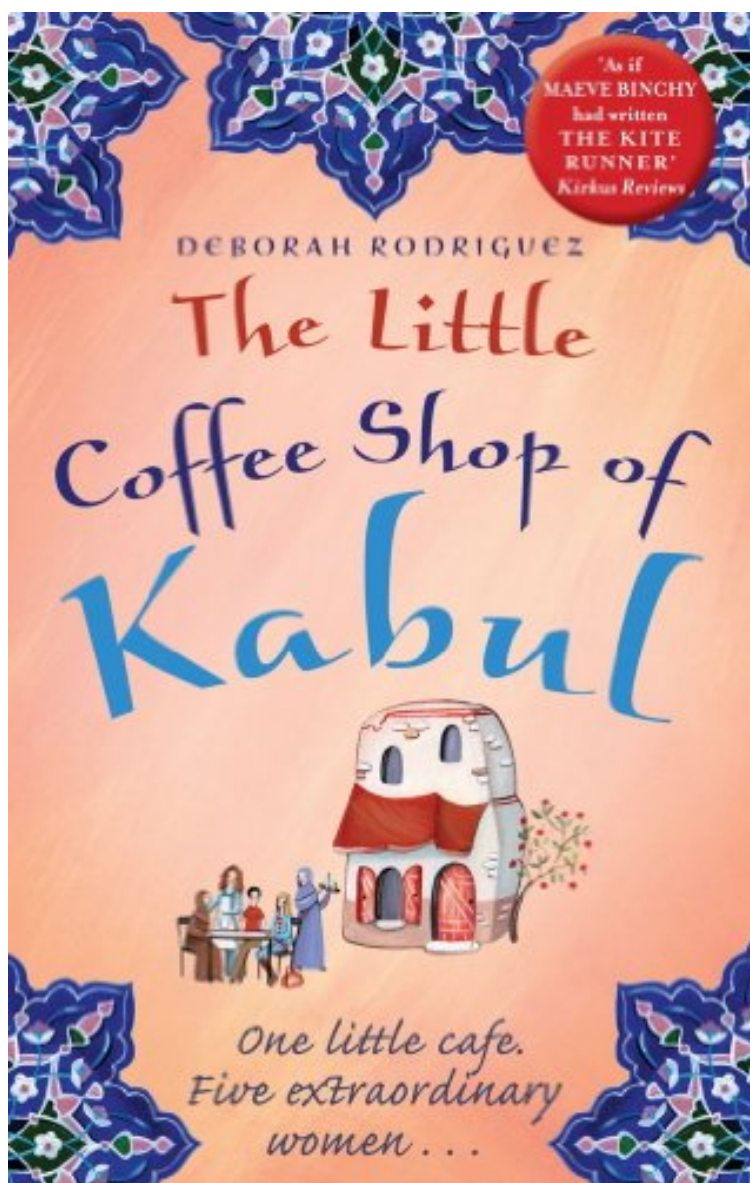


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The Little Coffee Shop of Kabul (English Edition)



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(Mobile book) The Little Coffee Shop of Kabul (English Edition)

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn a little coffee shop in one of the most dangerous places on earth, five very different women come together. SUNNY, the proud proprietor, who needs an ingenious plan - and fast - to keep her caf and customers safe. YAZMINA, a young pregnant woman stolen from her remote village and now abandoned on Kabul's violent streets. CANDACE, a wealthy American who has finally left her husband for her Afghan lover, the enigmatic Wakil. ISABEL, a determined journalist with a secret that might keep her

from the biggest story of her life. And HALAJAN, the sixty-year-old den mother, whose long-hidden love affair breaks all the rules. As these five women discover there's more to one another than meets the eye, they form a unique bond that will for ever change their lives and the lives of many others. The Little Coffee Shop of Kabul is the heart-warming and life-affirming fiction debut from the author of the bestselling memoir The Kabul Beauty School.

Extrait! It was a vibrant blue-skied Afghan morning, the kind that made Yazmina stop to loosen her scarf and tilt her face to the sun. She and her younger sister, Layla, were returning from the well, their calloused feet accustomed to repeated treks on the ancient dirt. The tiny cowrie shells that decorated Yazmina's long black dress clacked with every step. She looked toward the snow-capped peaks to the north and prayed that this winter, Inshallah, God willing, would not be as bad as the last. It was so cold, so unforgiving, killing the goats, freezing the earth, destroying any chance of a good wheat crop. Another winter like that would surely make the threat of starvation real. Her secret, the one she carried in her belly, the one she could hide for only another month or two, flooded her with nausea. She tripped on a rock, her body not as sure and strong as it had been working only for one. She almost spilled the water from the kuza, the clay pot that she carried on her shoulder. "Yazmina, be careful! You're walking like a donkey with three legs," Layla said, even as she struggled with her own kuza. It was almost bigger than she was. Layla had been in high spirits all morning. She was too young to be covered in a chaderi like the one Yazmina was wearing, and her dark hair shone in the sunlight. When they arrived at their uncle's compound, they carefully placed the kuza in the cooking room and headed back to the main house. An unfamiliar black SUV with tinted windows was parked outside, and Layla ran toward it, letting out a squeal of delight. "Look, Yazmina! Look at the landawar!" Layla called. "It's bigger than our house!" But Yazmina knew that since no one in Nuristan could afford a car like this, it must've come from the city, and nothing good ever came from the city. A car like this brought a warlord or a drug lord. When cars like this had arrived before, girls had gone missing. Yazmina tried to laugh with Layla, but her heart sank. Heavy beads of perspiration formed on her brow and nausea overcame her again, though this time it had more to do with her fears than with the baby growing inside her. She stood by the door of the main salon where her uncle was talking to an older man with brown teeth wearing a tan-colored shalwaar kameez. Her uncle looked panicked. He pulled a small cloth purse of money from his pocket and offered it to the man. "This is baksheesh," money fit for a beggar, the man said with a sneer, and struck her uncle's hand, making the purse drop to the floor. She couldn't hear what else was being said, but she could hear her own heartbeat and over it she imagined her uncle pleading for mercy. She leaned heavily against the wall, letting out the breath she'd been holding. She couldn't blame him for what he'd done. After last year's harsh winter, he could barely afford to feed them all. But when Yazmina's husband was killed three months before, the one she'd known since she was a child and married when she was fifteen, she and Layla had nowhere else to go. It was tradition that forced her uncle to take them in and borrow money from these thieves. She knew what was coming. He would not be able to protect her since he could not repay his debt. "Take my goats!" her uncle cried. "Take my house," he begged as he dropped to his knees. "But do not take Yazmina. It is as if I am selling her. Would you sell your eyes? Would you sell your heart?" He stopped for a moment to catch his breath, to think. "Besides," he continued, looking up into the cold eyes of the man looming over him, "my goats are worth more in the market than she is. She has already been married." "Yes, she is not a girl anymore," the man answered. "What I should take is your little one." He turned to Layla, who was now by Yazmina's side, his black eyes boring a hole through her. Yazmina's uncle pleaded with him. "No, Haji," he said, using the common name for such men. "I beg you. She is too young yet. She is still a child." Yazmina felt her sister take her hand and hold it tightly. "If I cannot get the money you owe me from this one, I'll be back for the little one after the snows have melted. Now come," he commanded Yazmina. Her uncle stood, and as he looked from the man to Yazmina, his strong jaw worked hard to keep his mouth closed against the curses he was struggling not to utter. He brushed the dust from his knees and escorted her to the car. He told her not to worry, but his face revealed what Yazmina already knew in her heart. She would be driven from her home in Nuristan, southwest on rubble-lined, pockmarked roads, to Kabul, and sold to the highest bidder, to be his third, perhaps even fourth wife, or worse, a slave, or worse yet—she would be forced to be a prostitute. A young man, unusually tall for an Afghan, with a black beard and deep-set eyes, was at the car's heavy back door, holding it open for Yazmina. Another was sitting in the driver's seat. Yazmina wanted to fight, to kick and scream and run, but she knew that to resist meant they'd take Layla. So she asked, "May I get my things? Can I bring a change of clothes?" "Get in the car!" the man yelled at her, pushing her shoulder roughly. She started to climb in, then turned to her uncle and hugged him. He whispered in her ear the poem that her own mother had recited to

Yazmina when she was only a baby: The moon is made round by the right hand of God. The moon is made crescent by his left. But it is God's heart that makes my love for you forever. She recited the last line along with him with much difficulty, choked, as she was, by the fullness in her throat. Then Yazmina gave Layla three kisses, each saltier than the last from the tears on her cheeks. "You'll have a blessed life, little one. Now show me that smile of yours, for that'll be my parting gift," she said. But the younger girl had started to cry herself, afraid she'd never see Yazmina again, knowing she could be next. From her pocket she pulled her prayer beads and put them into Yazmina's hand, clasping it tightly with her two little hands, not wanting to ever let go. "Enough good-byes," said the man with the brown teeth. "Get in the car." Yazmina quickly put the beads into her own pocket, gathered her long dress, and sat inside, pulling her legs in after her. Layla ran away, back to the cooking room. "Wait, wait for me!" she called. Yazmina knew she was getting water to throw at the car, a tradition to ensure that the person leaving would return one day. But Yazmina knew she would never be back, so she squared her shoulders, forced her eyes straight ahead, and sat tall as the old man got into the front seat with the driver and the young one got in next to her and closed the door. The SUV pulled away in a cloud of dust. By the time Layla got back with the water to throw at the car, it was already gone, a black speck on the road leading far down the hill. The Kabul Coffee House was jammed with regulars-misfits, missionaries and mercenaries, Afghans and foreigners-and Sunny, as usual, was at the counter. She surveyed her domain, pleased with the business, the buzz, the life that pulsed in the room. This was her very own place, here, in the middle of a war zone, in one of the most dangerous locations on earth. After a lifetime of hard luck and bad choices, finally, at the age of thirty-eight, she'd found a home. Sunny was the center of the cafe, and she planned never to leave. Kabul was the perfect place for her. Since nothing here was on solid ground, anything was possible, and anything could happen. Five men had just walked in, dressed in black, Foster Grants hiding their eyes, machine guns slung over their shoulders, sidearms hanging from their waists. She hadn't seen such beautiful men in a long, long time. In another country they'd mean trouble. But here, she knew they were five tall lattes and a plate of biscotti. "Hey guys," she said with the slight Southern lilt that she couldn't shake loose after all these years. "If you want a menu, you need to give me your guns, like the sign says." She nodded toward the door where a placard read: please check your weapons at the door. With a thick Eastern European accent, one of the men started to argue, and all eyes in the cafe turned toward them. Sunny flashed her biggest smile and assured him their guns would be safe. "And besides," she said, "with guns, no menu. You want to eat? You give them up." They reluctantly handed their firearms to Sunny, who then handed them to her barista and right-hand man, Bashir Hadi, who put them in the back room, where weapons were stored along with mops and brooms. They took off their leather jackets and scarves and Sunny hung them in the front closet. She met Bashir Hadi back at the counter. "I have some errands. I'll be back as soon as I can," she said, taking off her apron. "I'll go with you," he said, as he always did. "I'm fine," she replied, in their daily tradition. She knew what was coming next. "Make sure that you lock your doors. Keep your windows up. Promise me you will not drive with the top down, for goodness' sake! Avoid the roadblocks. Don't stop unless you have to. Don't take the side roads, or the alleys." "I've already asked Ahmet to get the car from the alley and bring it around to the front." "And I know I don't have to remind you-" "But you will." Sunny smiled. "You should not be driving and you should not be alone. Call me when you get there." "I always do." She reflexively clasped the cellphone that hung from her neck on a woven red cord. She'd lost too many setting them down on the counter. Today Sunny had a mission to bring flowers to the newly elected head of the Women's Ministry. Though they'd met before at the cafe, a formal visit would secure an important relationship, necessary for a woman in Kabul running a business. Sunny put on a coat and took a chador from a hook behind the counter and covered her long, wavy brown hair, carefully wrapping the silky fabric around her neck and shoulders, pretending it was a luxurious, chic stole that she wore out of choice. "Salaam alaikum," she said to Ahmet, the cafe's chokidor, its guard, as she passed through the front door, which he held open for her. "Keep an eye on that bunch inside, okay?" "Wa alaikum as-salaam," Ahmet replied. He was small, like most Afghan men; the machine gun he carried over his shoulder probably outweighed him, making him look like a toy soldier, especially with his hair slicked back like a helmet on his head. Sunny smiled, understanding now where the gel she kept in the cafe's bathroom had gone. She rattled off in Dari the usual niceties: How are you, Ahmet? And how is your sister in Germany? And every other living relative? Then she inquired about their states of health. In Kabul, it would be rude to do otherwise. Ahmet was a serious traditionalist, and following the rules-both unspoken and in the Koran-was important to him. He had earned her respect. He'd kept her and her customers safe more times than she could count. He asked her the same questions and a few minutes later she was free to

leave. She looked up and down the pedestrian-filled street and in front of every other business was a man dressed just like Ahmet, with dark glasses, black shirt, and black pants. Some had even bigger guns, bigger knives. She laughed to herself. These chokidor are competing with one another, she thought, like the schoolgirls back home with their cellphones, handbags, and jewelry. The difference was that in Kabul the accessories were Jacky clubs, guns, and daggers. Sunny navigated the narrow, tumultuous city streets in her big brown diesel-powered Mercedes with more confidence than she ever had driving her trusty little Toyota in her hometown of Jonesboro, Arkansas. Passing the carts of figs and fruits, goat heads, fat-tailed sheep, and cardamom, and the stalls selling grain, apples, watermelon, and honeydew from the north, or colorful, hand-woven cloths from India and Pakistan, Sunny noticed clusters of men with heads bent together in discussion, and other men walking proudly, followed by women in sky blue burqas. The disparity between men's and women's lives here was something she'd never get used to. She rolled down her window to hear the hollering of children running after her car, one shouting, "Hey, mister, need a body-guard?" The smells of dung and sweat and spices and diesel exhaust fumes merged into a heady mix that reminded Sunny why she loved Kabul and why she had chosen to stay. She parked near Chicken Street. Here stall after stall of Afghan souvenirs-handmade carpets, woven pashmina, turbans, clothing, jewelry, boxes, and belts of the extraordinary native blue lapis, and the hand-carved dark wood furniture from Nuristan that she loved-extended two full blocks. Today it was unusually quiet. The shop owners raised their heads and smiled eagerly as Sunny walked by, hoping for a sale. She was one of the few foreigners not afraid to shop there since business had been beaten down by recent suicide bombings. Everyone in Kabul was affected by the blasts, including Sunny. But shopping made her feel that her life had some normalcy. She could choose, barter, and trade coins for products, as if she were a regular person and Kabul a regular place. At the juncture of Chicken and Flower streets, East met West, with imports of cameras and electronics from Pakistan and China, juices (most had expired in 1989) from Uzbekistan, pirated videos, postcards, potato chips, Italian bottled water, cheese from Austria. Here, too, was Behzad, the one and only English-language bookstore in the country, where she and her friends bought books that they discussed as if experts on Oprah, and the store next door where they got their DVDs. On Flower Street itself, her breath caught in her throat. Amid the rubble and pale beige stone, and sitting next to an open sewer, there were the roses. From the Hardcover edition. *Revue de presse Charming* [a book] to warm your heart. *Good Housekeeping* "[A] fast-paced winner of a novel...Readers of every political stripe will find *A Cup of Friendship* the work of a serious artist with great powers of description at her disposal."--*Minneapolis Star-Tribune*; *Kansas City Star* Rodriguez paints a vivid picture of Afghan culture as if Maeve Binchy had written *The Kite Runner*. *Kirkus* sA great book club read. *Library Journal* A superb debut novel Rodriguez captures place and people wholeheartedly, unveiling the faces of Afghanistan's women through a wealth of memorable characters who light up the page. *Publishers Weekly* With a message to protect and empower the women of Kabul, Rodriguez weaves her tale of life, death, and marriage Readers will appreciate the in-depth, sensory descriptions of this oft-mentioned and faraway place that most have never seen. *Booklist* Engrossing. Fans of the authors best-selling memoir, *Kabul Beauty School*, should be looking for this one, and other readers will quickly discover it, especially those with an interest in current events in the Middle East or for lovers of cross-cultural tales. *Library Journal* "I loved it...Ensemble casts of characters I wish I could meet, centered around a dynamic female presence. Matter of fact love and humor. Great food and place writing."--Elizabeth Willse "The story here is more about the complexity and, ultimately, importance of bonds that transcend culture and circumstance."--*Bookpage* "Offers stories about the complex lives of women and the many ways their friendships transcend culture."--*San Antonio Express-News* "A brilliant story of strength and appreciation of difference that, surprisingly, restores belief in humanity."--*Daily Telegraph (Australia)* "Rodriguez's first work of fiction hums along with humour and understanding."--*Australian Womens Weekly* "A perfect summer read."--*Sunday Herald Sun (Australia)* "The story of these womens friendship is immensely rewarding and one that tells of a place and time where love can still change everything."--*Courier Mail (Australia)* "This warm-hearted story will make you laugh, then cry and be concerned at how some women have to live in such a dangerous country."--*Womans Day (Australia)* "Warm and disarming."--*Sunday Age (Australia)* "An eye-opening and uplifting tale of sisterhood and survival."--*Grazia (Australia)* "A heart-warming tale about female friendships."--*Cosmopolitan (Australia)* "They laugh, cry and love their way through trouble and triumph. You'll read it in one sitting."--*Weekend West (Australia)* Praise for Deborah Rodriguez's *Kabul Beauty School* [A] rollicking story . . . transcends the feel-good genre largely because of the authors superior storytelling gifts and wicked sense of humor. *The New York Times* *Delightful* . . . [a] bighearted and

entertaining memoir. Entertainment Weekly Composed of heartbreak, hope, poignancy and candor . . . Kabul Beauty School is laid out masterfully, pulling readers in from the very first page. Los Angeles Times [A] jaw-dropping true story, alternately hilarious and moving . . . The school was both an oasis and an opportunity. New York Daily News Endearingly frank . . . inspirational and engaging. The Washington Post Fascinating . . . lively and honest. USA Today From the Hardcover edition.